

Orient Inst

The University of Chicago
Libraries



GIFT OF

Journal of Religion



JUDAISM

*A Presentation of Its Essence and
a Suggestion for Its Preservation*

by

Rabbi Morris Lichtenstein

Leader and Founder of Jewish Science

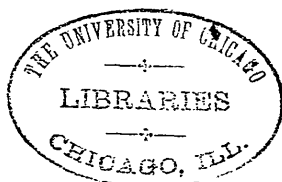


1934

JEWISH SCIENCE PUBLISHING CO.
NEW YORK CITY

BM560
L7

Copyright, 1934, by
MORRIS LICHTENSTEIN
All Rights Reserved



Printed in the U. S. A.

Gift 1

Journal of Religion

CONTENTS

Foreword

PART I

CHAPTER	PAGE
I. JUDAISM	11
The Scriptures	14
II. THE GOD CONCEPTION	21
III. FROM THE SCRIPTURES TO SCIENCE	35
The Viewpoint of Judaism . . .	49
IV. ETHICS	57
Ethics of Love	64
Ethics of Justice	71
Ethics of General Humaneness	81
V. VIRTUES	87
Anger and Tranquility	89
Pride and Meekness	91
Deceit and Truthfulness	95
Pessimism and Optimism	98
VI. PRAYER	102
VII. CEREMONIES	117

CONTENTS

PART II

VIII. THE PROBLEM	133
IX. CAUSES	140
X. THE SOLUTION	155
Devotional Judaism	155
Ethical Judaism	163
Virtues in Judaism	169
Why We Remain Jews	174

PART III

The Method

XI. EDUCATION	181
XII. TRAINING OUR CHILDREN IN JUDA- ISM	193
XIII. THE SYNAGOGUE	207
XIV. THE RABBI	213
XV. THE HOME	220
Conclusion	227

FOREWORD

The Jew in this land is often accused of indifference to Judaism; however, as far as we know, no earnest effort has ever been made to bring before him the essence of his faith and show him its applicability to his own daily life. Judaism is usually presented as something connected essentially with the past of Israel, as something that played a paramount part in the life of our remote ancestors, but no particular attempt has been made to point out its place in the life of our people to-day. Our youth, at best, is initiated into a series of religious ceremonies, offered to them as Judaism. It is needless to say that our traditional ceremonies are beautiful and elevating; but Judaism is more than ceremonies.

It is therefore the object of this volume to show: first, what Judaism fundamentally consists of; then, how its teachings can be

adequately applied to modern life; finally, the methods by which this end may be achieved.

It is our belief that the connection between Judaism and daily life must be strongly emphasized to our people in this land, else Judaism may become a mere external adjunct to the life of the Jew, something which he can easily defer or dispense with altogether. The American Jew has caught the spirit of his environment, he has grown pragmatic,—in his idealism, not less than in his materialism. Religion has not been instilled in him as something vital to his life, as something helpful to his happiness and spiritual satisfaction; and, therefore, he is not earnestly religious. This error must be corrected. Originally Judaism aimed at the establishment of perfect conduct, at the promotion of human happiness, at man's realization of God's presence. These aims must again be stressed to-day.

PART ONE

CHAPTER I

JUDAISM

Judaism aims to establish a relationship of devotion between man and God; but, in addition, it also seeks, and that with even greater emphasis, to establish a just and humane relationship between man and his neighbor.

Objections are frequently raised when one attempts to define Judaism as purely the religion of the Jewish people. There are many among our people who disavow all connection with the God of Israel, cherishing only the ethical teachings of the Old Testament and none of its theological dogmas, who, nevertheless, insist upon being counted among the followers of Judaism. And so are there others who are chiefly interested in emphasizing the racial or national consciousness of the Jew, which, to their mind, is the sole essence of Judaism. Finally, there are those to whom Judaism is fundamentally a specific

outlook upon the universe, a monotheistic conception of reality, expressive of One Mind, which may be regarded as merely a philosophic viewpoint, not having necessarily any religious significance.

Despite these considerations, we do not hesitate to state that Judaism can only be understood when it is regarded, in the total of all its manifestations, as the religion of Israel. It cannot correctly be said, though the claim is frequently made, that Judaism is far more comprehensive a term than is the Jewish religion, or that it embraces aspects of the life of the Jew which have no connection at all with his religion. For the Jewish religion actually deals with every phase both of the life of the individual and the life of the Jewish people. A study of Judaism, such as we shall here attempt, reveals that nothing within the scope of Jewish life is outside the scope of the Jewish religion.

Jewish lore has rather discouraged the study of ontological problems. The existence of God was taken as an absolute truth which admitted no argument or investigation. It

was the greatest of all truths, which man need not trouble himself to verify. The Torah concerns itself chiefly with the daily experiences of life; and the Jewish mind applied itself mainly to the interpretation of the Law so as to make it applicable to the ever evolving and broadening experiences of life; hence the Talmud, the Halachah, the numberless subsequent expositions, all bringing practical wisdom to bear on practical problems. Theoretical problems became conspicuous in Judaism only when Judaism came in contact with foreign religions or cultures. It was then compelled to find in its own field answers to questions raised and solved by these others. It was when Judaism came in touch, first with Greek philosophy and, centuries later, with Medieval thought, particularly with Arabic philosophy, that it turned to metaphysical problems, seeking the solution in its own sources in order to offset the dangerous influences of neighbor religions and philosophies.

In our present age, the age of intellectual investigation, the age which considers itself so greatly superior to the past that it con-

stantly questions its wisdom and authority, the theoretical aspects of Judaism must again occupy a position in the foreground of our religious knowledge. We must demonstrate the fact that although the religion of Israel was given to the people at a very crude period of its development, yet does it contain eternal truths as vital and impelling today as they were in antiquity.

THE SCRIPTURES

It is our object to study Judaism in its applicability to our modern age. But as the foundation of Judaism is established in the Old Testament, we must, before we proceed with our main study, make mention, though very briefly, of the attitude of our generation towards the Scriptures.

Two opposite views are frequently entertained concerning the Bible. One is, that every thought, every word, contained in the Sacred Book is literally true. Those who cherish this view sternly oppose all attempts

to rationalize or tamper with any statement or narrative in the Scriptures, even where there is apparent to others glaring contradictions to the laws of nature. From the point of view of these "fundamentalists," when knowledge or experience conflict with the utterances of the Book, the error lies entirely with the former. The Bible is to them the literal word of God, hence it contains immovable truths and constitutes a standard by which the veracity of all other facts may be tried.

The second view goes to other extremes. It maintains that the Bible, being the product of a people in its primitive stages, presents conceptions deeply tinged with immaturity, presents ideas of God, of man, and of the world at large that have long been outgrown, that it is therefore an obsolete volume that has no message for the man of modern times.

We may safely look upon both these extreme and opposite attitudes as hurtful to the preservation of Judaism. To cling to the literal word of the Bible to-day, in the age of scientific research and enlightenment, is to place Judaism in the background of life,

among the relics of antiquity, and not among the guiding forces by which humanity may gain deeper truths and be led to nobler conduct. The modern mind must be convinced before it believes, and conviction today implies an acceptance of something that is in harmony with experience. Authority is indeed followed, but only when it reveals or confirms demonstrable facts. We need but remind our ultra-orthodox adherents that even in the Talmud objections frequently crop up against the literal acceptance of the Scriptures. "Rabbi Josi says that the Shechinah never really descended upon the earth, and that Moses and Elijah never went up to heaven."¹ Here you find a bold denial of the Sinaic revelation. Resh Lakish denies that the last verses of the Pentateuch were written by Moses²—the first known objection to the traditional view that Moses was the author of the entire Torah. Statements to the effect that the Torah was given in separate scrolls,³ or that there is no chronological unity in the Scriptures, are, it is clear, early

1. Sukah 5

2. Baba Battra 4b

3. Gitin 60a

attempts at the higher textual criticism of the Bible. Even so far back was it clear to thinking minds that Judaism was more than the literal interpretation of the Sacred Book. It should be obvious to us that a division must be drawn between the letter and the spirit of the Book, even as the Talmud frequently draws a line of demarcation between the letter and the spirit of the laws which it itself contains. "If the laws," it says, "were to be literally interpreted on all occasions, much injustice would be committed in the name of the Law." Likewise, if the letter of the Biblical content were made the chief point of emphasis, a great deal of truth would be lost; men would seek God in the supernatural, and overlook His real domain in the world of the natural. The letter of the Book does indeed often reflect the early uncultivated state of the people of Israel, but the spirit, as will be seen, holds a message for all generations.

Those who hold the view opposite to that of the literalists, are equally extreme, and even more in error, for they fail to recognize the real meaning and the true greatness of

the Book. Granting that a great deal of clearly legendary material has been incorporated, reflecting the mind of a people in the early stages of its development, and granting also that the Book has no uniform origin but is the composite of several documents, do these facts at all affect its vital message? Had this Book been nought more than a document revealing the life of an uncultivated people, it surely could not have become the supreme source of spiritual influence for mankind during all these centuries. It would have been, at best, but a relic, one among many others, of ancient days; one at which we children of civilization might look back with interest, as we might at former footsteps, but never look up to as our ultimate goal. The simple fact that the Scripture is still the source of guidance and inspiration to vast multitudes of humanity to-day, should of itself cause us to reflect upon the deep resources of spiritual vitality that it contains. The failing of the ultra-orthodox is that he lays altogether too great a stress upon the letter of the Bible, but the failing of the ultra-modernist is that he sees only the let-

ter of the Bible, and finding that wanting, he rejects the whole living structure.

We find the truth in the middle path. There is a significant passage in the Jerusalem Talmud, which serves us well at this point. "The Torah," it says,¹ "may be compared to two paths, one overlaid with fire and the other with snow. By taking the first path, one may perish in the flames; by taking the other, one will die of the chill. What is there left to do but to walk in between." In endeavoring to understand the Torah, it is essential to avoid attaching oneself to the views at either end. Fanaticism blinds the understanding, while a superficial radicalism, making criticism its objective, leaves only a heap of ruins in its trail. If a precious stone, in its original state, is cast away because of its crudeness and its apparent worthlessness, the radiance it contains will be missed; and if the attempt is made to use it in that raw state, it will yield no light. It is thus with the truth which the Bible contains. It is not to be thrown away, though its accretions must be removed in order that its true light may shine forth.

1. Chagigah, sec. 2, Halachah 1.

Having made clear our attitude toward our sacred writings, it shall now be our immediate aim to point out the cardinal contents of Judaism which we consider compatible with and, in fact, indispensable to modern life. We may divide these into five sections: 1) The God conception of Judaism; 2) the ethics of Judaism; 3) personal virtues enjoined by Judaism; 4) Prayer; 5) religious ceremonies. We consider an exposition of these phases of Judaism essential before taking up a consideration of the means and methods by which Judaism may best be preserved. We hope to make clear in this way what it is that we are seeking to preserve.

CHAPTER II

THE GOD CONCEPTION

There are at least three distinct God conceptions in the Old Testament. These different God conceptions reflect different stages in the development of the spiritual grasp of the people. The more elementary conception is found in the Pentateuch and in the Books of Joshua, Judges and Samuel. Here God is indeed superior to all other gods; He is great, powerful, and just. But He is limited. He does not excel the dimensions of an earthly potentate, though His seat is "in the Heavens above." His chief interest is the people of Israel. He redeems them from oppression; He works miracles in their behalf; He reveals Himself to them at Sinai; He gives them the ten commandments; He institutes for them the rituals of sacrifice and the yearly festivals; He leads them through the wilderness; He fights with them against their enemies; He brings them to the Promised Land; He inflicts punishment upon them

when they forget His law, and forgives them when they turn back unto Him.

Through all these eventualities the God of Israel reveals Himself as a Superior Being, indeed, but one not far from man's own rank. He loves and He hates, He guards and He also destroys. He vehemently resents the violation of His laws, and promises abundance and health and victory against foes to those who undeviatingly follow His laws. He moves from place to place; He comes and goes, He descends from the Heavens, and re-ascends thereto. References are frequently made to his vision,¹ "And God Saw;" to His hearing, "And God heard;" to His speech, "And God said," "And God commanded;" to His face, "May the Lord let His countenance shine upon thee;" to His hand and to His arm, "Behold the hand of the Lord is upon thy cattle," "With a strong hand and with an outstretched arm did the Lord, thy God, bring thee forth from the Land of Egypt;" to His general appearance, "And the appear-

1. Since the same phrases are repeated innumerable times throughout the Pentateuch, the source of such brief phrases need not be indicated.

ance of the glory of the Lord was like devouring fire on the top of the mount in the eyes of the children of Israel;"¹ to His heart, "And it repenteth the Lord that He had made man on the earth and it grieved Him at His heart;"² to His feet, "And there was under His feet the like of a paved work of sapphire stone, and the like of the very heaven for clearness."³

One who gains his conception of God from these passages of the Bible may think of Him as a great benefactor, as a just ruler, as a righteous judge, but he will always see Him as a being possessed of form and dimension, one who observes and thinks, questions and answers, helps and punishes, warns and carries out His warnings, promises and remains forever faithful to His promises. He is a good but stringent being; He is a national Deity; He is essentially the God of His Chosen People, and utterly indifferent to the destiny of other races.

A much higher conception of God is com-

1. Exodus 24:17

2. Genesis 6:7

3. Exodus 24:10

municated by the prophets. They lay their emphasis on the God of the Universe, on the God of creation. While the Book of Genesis, at the outset, also speaks of God the Creator, there is a fundamental difference between the Creator in Genesis and the Creator conceived by the prophets. In the chapters of creation in Genesis, we see God as a great Miracle Worker, who performs that which man cannot possibly imitate, and yet His method is essentially a human method. From the account of creation in Genesis we learn that God undertakes one thing at a time, completes it, then "seeing that it is good," names it and designates its function, and goes on to the fulfillment of another task on another day. His rest comes when His labors have been completed. The prophets do not appear so cognisant of the details involved in the making of a universe; they omit, in fact, all references to the method of creation; but they are firmly convinced of the presence of the Creator. They plead ignorance of the ways of God, but they are deeply conscious of His presence. Indeed, they deprecate any human attempt to describe Him

or comprehend Him. "Who hath meted out the spirit of the Lord? or who was His counsellor that he might instruct Him?"¹ To whom then will ye liken Me, that I should be equal, saith the Holy One."²

The main proof of God's presence, as expressed in the Pentateuch, seems to be "I am the Lord, thy God, who brought thee out of the land of Egypt." The prophets find the chief proof of His presence in another source; "Lift your eyes on high and see: who hath created these?"³ "Fear ye not me? saith the Lord; will ye not tremble at my presence? Who hath placed for the bound of the sea an everlasting ordinance which it cannot pass? and though the waves thereof toss themselves, yet can they not prevail; though they roar, yet can they not pass over it."⁴ "Prepare to meet thy God, O Israel. For, lo, He that formed the mountains, and created the wind, and declared unto man what is his thought, That maketh the morning darkness, and treadeth upon the high

1. Isaiah 40:15

2. Isaiah 40:25

3. Isaiah 40:26

4. Jeremiah 5:22

places of the earth; the Lord, the God of hosts is His name.”¹

In the Pentateuch we find that God desires a sanctuary for His dwelling place among His people. “And let them make me a sanctuary, that I may dwell among them.”² “And there I will meet with thee and I will speak with thee from above the ark-cover, from between the two cherubim which are upon the ark of the testimony.”³ A very different conception of God’s dwelling place is expressed by the prophets. “Thus saith the Lord: The heaven is my throne and the earth is my footstool; where is the house that ye may build unto Me? and where is the place that may be my resting-place? for all these things hath My hand made, and so all these things came to be.”⁴

Again, the God of the Pentateuch requests animal sacrifice. A variety of occasions arise for which these offerings are appropriate. There are expiatory offerings, for the purpose of atoning for sins committed, there are offerings of thanksgiving, there are puri-

1. Amos 4:13
2. Exodus 25:8

3. Exodus 25:22
4. Isaiah 66:1-2a

fication offerings, peace offerings, praise offerings. The God of the prophets, on the other hand, is strongly opposed to the sacrificial cult. "To what purpose are the multitude of your sacrifices unto Me? saith the Lord; I am full of the burnt-offerings of rams, and the fat of fed beasts; and I delight not in the blood of the bullocks, or of lambs, or of he-goats."¹ "I desire mercy and not sacrifice, and the knowledge of God more than burnt offerings."²

We can see that in reaching the prophets we have come not only upon a different God from the one we have met in the Pentateuch, but also a far superior one. The God of the prophets is still the guardian of Israel; Israel, as always, is the beloved child, in whom He delights when it follows His commandments, and whom He punishes when it wilfully departs from them. Nevertheless we are made to realize here that the people of Israel is only a part of His creation, it has a large share, but not the whole, of His interest; for He is the Creator of the whole universe,

1. Isaiah 1:11

2. Hosea 6:6

the Maker of *all* men. "Thus saith the Lord, the Holy One of Israel and his Maker . . . I, even I, have made the earth, and created man upon it; I, even My hands, have stretched out the heavens, and all their hosts have I commanded."¹ Again, "Thus saith God the Lord, He that created the heavens and stretched them forth, He that spread forth the earth and that which cometh out of it, He that giveth breath unto the people upon it, and spirit to them that walk therein."² In the prophets we see the rise of the Creator from a national deity to that of a universal God. Israel may be closest to Him, but all men are His children; His care is indeed for everything, as well as for everyone He called into existence.

But we reach a still higher conception of God when we arrive at the Psalms. Here there is a still greater accentuation of God as Universal Power and Infinite Wisdom. Here God is not only the Creator but also the One who maintains order in nature, He is the Cause of all natural phenomena. It is He

1. Isaiah 45:11, 12

2. Isaiah 42:5

“Who covereth the heaven with clouds, who prepareth rain for the earth, who maketh the mountains spring with grass.”¹ The prophets, although they too saw God as the Creator of all things, still conceived of Him as dwelling in the heavens, above creation; they saw Him seated on a “throne high and lifted up.” Now, in the Psalms, we see God dwelling not only above creation but also within creation, for God is spirit and is therefore not limited either to space or to time. “Whither shall I go from Thy spirit? Or whither shall I flee from Thy presence? If I ascend up into heaven, Thou art there; if I make my bed in the netherworld, behold, Thou art there. If I take the wings of the morning, and dwell in the uttermost parts of the sea, even there shall Thy hand lead me and Thy right hand would hold me. And if I say: ‘Surely the darkness shall envelop me, and the light about me shall be night;’ even the darkness is not too dark for Thee, but the night shineth as the day.”² “From everlasting to everlasting, Thou Art God . . .

1. Psalm 147:8

2. Psalm 139:7-12

For a thousand years in thy sight are but as yesterday when it is past.”¹ “Thy kingdom embraces all the worlds and thy rule extends over all generations.”²

We can see that the Psalmist is deeply imbued with the idea of God’s omnipresence and eternity; he articulates clearly the thought that God not only created the world but that He dwells everywhere therein, permeating all reality.

The Psalmist is also strongly imbued with the conception of God’s all-sustaining care or providence. In the prophets and in the Pentateuch, God’s care is also manifest, but mainly for His people Israel, and that only when it follows His commandments and lives righteously; the emphasis is on God’s might, on His endless power to create and destroy, to direct the elements, to annihilate the nations in war with Israel. The Psalmist recognizes God’s might, but his heart is far more filled with the consciousness of God’s loving care, and not only for Israel, but for all men, for all beings that He called into existence.

1. Psalm 90:2, 4

2. Psalm 145:13

God is conceived as a shepherd, "as a father who hath compassion upon his children."¹ "The Lord is good to all, and His tender mercies are over all His works." "Thou openest Thy hand, and satisfiest every living thing with favor."² "Man and beast Thou preservest, O Lord. How great is Thy loving kindness, O God."³ "For the Lord is good; His mercy endureth forever; and His faithfulness unto all generations."⁴ "Gracious is the Lord and righteous; yea, our God is compassionate."⁵ "He giveth food to all flesh, for His mercy endureth forever."⁶ The Psalmist appeals to God's loving-kindness more than to His righteousness. Humanity at large shares in the abundance of God, for all are a part of His creation.

In harmony with this conception, stress is laid, in the Psalms, on the nearness of God. He is near "to all who call upon Him, who call upon Him in truth."⁷ God's interest is not only in the vast phenomena of creation,

1. Psalm 103:13

5. Psalm 116:5

2. Psalm 145:9, 16

6. Psalm 136:25

3. Psalm 36:7b, 8a

7. Psalm 145:18

4. Psalm 100:5

but also in every being, though ever so insignificant, whom He called to share existence. Throughout the Psalms it is the individual, in distress, in illness, in moments of weakness, who appeals for God's help. Because of this consciousness of God's nearness, man here, in contrast to the indications in the Pentateuch, prays for himself and without intermediary. The prayers offered in the Psalms are those of a soul in need, pouring itself out before Him Who is conceived as a loving and ever present Helper.

It is necessary here to repeat that if one were to seek to grasp the Jewish God by merely reading the first chapter of Genesis or the stories of the Pentateuch in which the supernatural plays a predominant role, his understanding of this God would necessarily be very limited. In these portions of the Scriptures, the acts of God are shown to a people at the primitive stage of its development; God's greatness could have been comprehended only when portrayed in the tone of a human epic, God being a superlatively heroic being, performing unheard of deeds of

might and valor, violating the laws of cause and effect, that is, violating the laws of nature, working "miracles without number." In battling and conquering Pharaoh, forcing him to release the children of Israel from their slavery, feeding them in the wilderness and guiding them through it for forty years, He has proved Himself the type of God or super-hero that a primitive people could understand and worship.

But the true God conception, that which we consider the true God conception, is attained only in the later stages of our people's development, and is clearly grasped by the prophets and even more so by the Psalmists. Now God is conceived not as a hero, but as a Cause; as the Cause of all existence. Here He is conceived as the infinite Source of wisdom and goodness and might. Here His greatness is found not in His ability to infringe upon the laws of nature, but in His power to establish these very laws; not in His interference with the processes of existence but in His being the very cause of these processes. The awe is not that He is a creature of miracles, but that He is the Designer

of every phenomenon, the Sustainer of every being, the Maker of all things, dwelling within the world of His creation. And this God is not only the God of Israel, but the God of all nations, the Father of all men, the Source of all life.

CHAPTER III

FROM THE SCRIPTURES TO SCIENCE

Since the recent ascendancy of science, the fear has been paramount that science will undermine the position of religion. We cannot ourselves see science and religion as competitive systems reaching for the same goal, seeking to achieve the same end, satisfying the same cravings in man. Science and religion, it is plain to us, each has its own sphere, and each has for its separate object the satisfaction or the awakening of a separate aspect in man. We see science and religion in perfect accord, for, in a great sense, science is interpretive of and supplementary to religion.

In our understanding of religion at this moment, we leave out of account all creed, all dogma, all theology. We mean here by religion simply the realization of the presence of a Supreme Mind which saturates all reality, from which all beings, all life, emanate;

we mean the realization of a Mind which is the source of all phenomena in nature, the origin of all the laws by which the world moves and by which its order is maintained, a Mind which is eternally creative and whose aim it is to conserve that which He calls into existence. Religion deals not with the immediate aspects of reality, or with the appearances of nature, but with the very essence which lies at the core of existence. It is not concerned with the layers of the tree or with its roots or with the quality of its timber or with the nature of its foliage or with its fruit, but with the *principle* by which the tree was formed, by which it grows and is sustained, and which dwells in the very heart of its being. Likewise is religion not interested in the stature of a man, nor in his organs, nor in his senses, nor in his manifold structures, nor even in the nature of his mind, but in the principle by which his very being is made possible; religion is interested in that essence which distinguishes man's living state from his dead state. In that essence lies the secret of his growth, of his vitality, of his mental energy, of his develop-

ment. It is in the vital essence of existence, whether that manifests itself in the minutest being in nature or in an immeasurable planet (for the essence of both is the same), that religion is chiefly interested.

On the other hand, the attention of science is directed to an entirely different sphere. Science deals only with the appearances of nature, that is, with the realities which are subject to the perception of the senses. Science therefore is not concerned with the primary cause of existence, or with the power inherent in nature at large and in each being; its main interest is the physical composition and behavior of the things in nature. Science does not seek for the principle of existence indwelling in the tree, in the flower, in the blade of grass, but seeks for the nature of their substances and their reactions. Nor, for the very reason that it deals solely with the tangible aspects of reality, is science interested in searching for the principle of life, the soul immanent in man. Science minutely studies the organs, the systems, the mechanisms, the tissues and cells, the behaviors, of a human being, but

realizes that any field that may lie beyond these is outside the scope of its purpose and its reach.

The fundamental difference between science and religion lies not only in the separate fields which each is concerned in searching, but also in the separate faculties employed by each one for the attainment of truth. Science delves into the visual aspects of reality, hence its chief instruments are the senses. Its experiences are essentially sense experiences. It observes and investigates, it analyzes and synthesizes, primarily through the sensory and motor actions of the senses. It gains convictions, it discovers truths, it establishes axioms, but all these would have been impossible without the instrumentality of the senses. The senses are the open windows through which the physical world, the realm of science, makes its way to the world of human consciousness. Reason and imagination are indeed employed, but the chief function of these faculties in science is either to interpret the facts observed by the senses, or to form new combinations, in-

ventions, based upon these very observations.

Religion, however, is not established through the testimony of the senses; religion is established through faith. Faith, too, implies conviction, but it is not a conviction brought to us by the senses; it is a conviction that comes to the mind from an inner source; it asserts itself throughout the channel of consciousness, it flows in like a feeling, although it is more subtle than the feelings awakened in human relationships; it bends reason and perception and imagination unto itself, and overmasters them with its truth. The religious mind is convinced and has no need of logical proof for its conviction; it is a sort of an *a priori* conviction. Religion may also make use of the facts of perception and the evidence of reason in order to fortify its position; but the proofs for religion presented through these sources are of no vital significance in the creation of religious convictions. The fact that the mind detects order or design in nature, or that it conceives a first cause or teleological ends in the processes of existence, may, indeed,

strengthen the mind's belief in the existence of God, but these observations will not, of themselves, generate faith.

Faith is more than belief. Belief is generally established either as a sequence to logical deductions or as the outcome of trust in authority. Many of us, for instance, believe that the laws of nature are uniform and immutable and that they cannot be infringed upon; many others believe that the miracles of Moses before Pharaoh were actually performed as written, because they are recorded in the Sacred Book. But faith requires neither authority nor logic for its existence. It carries its own logic, it is its own authority. The man of faith does not rationalize, he feels that there is an overwhelming Presence filling the universe and interested in the destiny of each of His beings, also in him who is one of His creations. In a sense, faith is like love which, when it surges in the heart, has no interest in argument or in proof, but strives only to identify itself with its object.

The differences between religion and science, we see, are of so fundamental a nature

that neither one can possibly claim to be the victor or even to declare supremacy over the other, their fields being so distinct, and their aims so different.

It is not our intention, however, to close our eyes to the fact that science and religion, despite the separateness of their realms, still frequently lock horns and even try to gore one another. But in order to understand why these clashes take place at all, we must first indicate and differentiate between two aspects of religion, dogma and pure religion. Dogma is the human phase of religion. It has for its object the establishment of a perceptible relationship between man and God. The creators of dogma have necessarily limited God; for in order to render such a relationship plausible, there was need of investing the deity with attributes that were human, though superlative, in their content, so that man might feel himself at all able to approach Him. Dogma therefore speaks of God's anger, of God's vengeance, of God's rulership, of His throne, of His authority. It presents God more and more in the image of man. Dogma also emphasizes the alleged

miracles which God has performed, His violations, in other words, of the laws of nature. Pure religion is man's deep realization that there is an Infinite Power who encompasses all reality, by Whose presence all existing things are accounted for, Who sustains all that exists. This truth has no reference to any particular dogma, or to any teaching or to any volume of the past, or to the testimony of any individual or supernatural act; it is the individual's own realization.

Observing closely the attacks of science upon religion, we note the fact that these sallies are directed mainly against the dogmatic aspect of religion. Although the spheres of science and religion are very distinct, yet science finds that dogma and theology frequently interfere with the progress of its ideas in the world. Science strictly adheres to causality, maintaining that whatever happens in nature is the result of a definite cause, which, in turn, is the result of a preceding cause, and so on *ad infinitum*. Dogma, on the other hand, maintains that God did and does things which not only have no causal antecedent, but which may be con-

trary to all preceding causes. God performs miracles, which implies the annihilation of the course of nature. Again, science shows that this world has had a very remote origin, that it has come into existence through the slow, gradual process of evolution. Contrary to this, dogma cherishes the story of creation told in Genesis, in all its literal meaning.

Conversely, the rebukes which science receives from religion are the outpourings of tenacious adherents to the dogmatic phase of religion. These unyielding defenders of tradition find that science strikes at the very roots of the deeply cherished ideas upon which their tangible religion was founded. Science, they find, presents an ontology which is utterly opposed to that of religion, as they see it. Science also ascribes a lowly origin to man, apparently depriving him of the privilege of being a direct creation of God. Finally, science teaches the absolute inviolability of the laws of nature,—a position which precludes all the preternatural acts which tradition attributes to the Deity.

But while science and religion find them-

selves at polar ends when they confront each other on the grounds of dogma, they have discovered that they are perfectly harmonious, in fact, supplementary to each other, when they meet on the basis of pure religion.

Science, as has been noted, deals only with the tangible aspect of existence. It is interested in discovering the nature, the relationship, and the reaction of things which are detectable and verifiable to the senses. When, however, science is confronted with problems that touch upon the invisible, it places a question mark before the problem, saying: here I must pause, I can go so far only, and no further. But where science ends, pure religion begins. Pure religion declares that the invisible, imperceptible, aspect of reality is divinity in action. Nature itself points strikingly to the presence of a Divine Mind responsible for all creation. This Divine Mind saturates all reality; it is the source of all life, the invisible essence of all existence. From it, or let us say from Him, all beings emanate, and by Him are they also sustained. All the unconscious wisdom which leaves its deep marks upon

nature and which is imprinted upon the form of every being, is Divine Wisdom.

Pure religion declares that God is One. For the more the human mind delves into the mysteries of the universe, the more does it realize that creation is but one harmonious whole. The whole universe is a multiplicity of forms, but consisting essentially of the same substance. Moreover, there is a uniform plan by which all beings have come into their present state. All things grow; every being or thing that exists has had an insignificant inception, from which it has gradually but steadily risen. Also, deep order governs all existence. The great stellar bodies which compose the universe do not exist or act as independent bodies; they are interdependently related to one another. Although endless spaces separate them one from the other, yet each influences the other, each supports the other, at the same time never interfering one with the other. The realization that the universe is one harmonious whole necessarily impels us to the recognition that the Mind that accounts for its presence is also One.

Pure religion also demonstrates that the Divine Mind, or God, is good. Although our first comprehension of God is that of a cosmic mind, expressing Himself in infinite creation, saturating and encompassing all reality, closer reflection leads us to the conviction that He is not only a creator, but also a Sustainer. All that He has called into being, are sustained by Him. Every form of life furnishes proof of this, but we can observe it best, for our present purpose, in the life best known to us, the realm of man. Man is placed in a world of abundance and plenty. He is endowed with faculties that enable him to reach out and obtain of this munificence. He is given the power of adapting himself to the varied demands and inclemencies of the atmosphere, of finding shelter in the winter and comfort in the heat of the summer. He is also pervaded with a craving for happiness — a craving which is at the bottom of all man's progress and civilization. These cardinal endowments we can only interpret as acts of goodness; they are directly responsible for the survival of the race and the preservation of

the individual.¹ The Divine Mind is, unmistakably, deeply concerned, not only in the existence of the infinite solar bodies, but in the life of every single and apparently insignificant being.

Likewise does pure religion conceive God as just and righteous. We conceive divine justice as not fundamentally different from human justice. For the ultimate objects of justice are harmony and preservation. Social justice, of course, aims at the preservation of the social order of man, at the preservation of the group. But we are aware that there are natural laws the purpose of which is to preserve the individual himself. If man violates these laws, punishment is sure to ensue, and this takes place, not in the world to come (which is so remote from our ken), but in this world, and in our present existence. When one violates the laws imbedded in one's nature, suffering is sure to follow. An invisible process of justice asserts itself. And this process springs from the very same

1. Wars and other human difficulties we regard as human creations, for these can be eliminated when man wills to do so. But the factors that make for preservation are inherent and permanent.

divine source that established laws of preservation both in nature and in man.

THE VIEWPOINT OF JUDAISM

The aspect of religion which we designated as pure religion and which we find to be in perfect harmony with the researches and intellectual explorations of our age, originated with and was fostered by the prophets and Psalmists of Israel. They were the ones who fully comprehended that the world was far more than visible reality, that within and above all phenomena constituting nature, there was a Wisdom infinite and unfathomable, which was the Source of all existence, by whose Presence all law and order prevailing in nature, all the manifestations of life, were accounted for. To them God was not a postulate, He was an overwhelming conviction. There is not a shadow of doubt or vacillation in their utterances; He was to them an overmastering truth. They saw Him through all the appearances of nature, they perceived Him in every cosmic action. "The heavens declare the glory of God and the firmament showeth His handiwork; day unto day uttereth speech, and night unto night revealeth

knowledge”¹ The earth is the Lord’s and the fulness thereof; the world, and they that dwell therein.”² They lived in the deep realization that above and below, far and near, everywhere, there dwells an invisible Creator and Sustainer.

Not only did the spiritual conception of God have its birth in Judaism but also the monotheistic idea. Judaism, from its very inception, has been identified with monotheism. In the very early stages of its existence was the monotheistic God conception engraved upon the soul of the Jewish people. “Hear, O Israel, the Lord our God, the Lord is One.” This declaration has been the very foundation of Judaism. When the earth was rife with idolatry, even then the voice of Israel began to make itself heard: “The Lord is One.” One spiritual One. Later, when Hellenic polytheism flourished, the voice of Israel became even clearer and more specific. “Know this day and lay it to thy heart, that the Lord, He is God in heaven above and upon the earth beneath;

1. Psalm 19:2-3

2. Psalm 24

there is none else.”¹ Still later, when, with Christianity, the triune conception of divinity began to spread throughout the world, the truth of the oneness of God was so deeply rooted in the consciousness of the people, that they were ready to defend it mightily, to suffer for it and even to die for it. The Jewish martyrs of the Diaspora surrendered their lives in the defense of the idea that God is One.

Likewise were the founders of Judaism imbued with the idea of God's goodness. When Moses entreated God that he be permitted to perceive His presence, he received this reply: “Behold, I shall let my goodness pass before thee.” We may take this to mean that man can best comprehend God when he reflects upon the goodness manifested in God's relation to the world and to man. The first attributes of God proclaimed to Moses, contain the very essence of goodness: “The Lord, the Lord, God, merciful and gracious, long-suffering, and abundant in goodness and truth; keeping mercy unto the thousandth generation, forgiving in-

1. Deut. 4:39

iquity and transgression and sin.”¹ The prophet Ezekiel saw God’s goodness transcending even His justice. “Have I any pleasure at all that the wicked should die? saith the Lord God; and not rather he should return from his ways, and live?”² The prophet Hosea is deeply aware of Israel’s faithlessness to God; nevertheless, he is strongly convinced of God’s forgiving goodness: “I will heal them freely: For mine anger is turned away from them.”³

The deepest consciousness, however, of God’s goodness and mercy finds expression in the Psalms. To the Psalmist God’s goodness is not a theory or a conception; it is an experience. He realizes that when he appeals to God “with his whole heart,” God, in

-
1. Exodus 34:6-7. Even the words of the Decalogue, “visiting the iniquity of the fathers upon the children unto the third and fourth generation of them that hate Me,” is interpreted in the Talmud to mean that God’s wrath holds only if they follow in the footsteps of their fathers, and are themselves haters of God. (Sahedrim 27). It has also been observed that while God’s vengeance pursues unto the third or fourth generation, his mercy keepeth unto the thousandth generation.
 2. Ezekiel 18:23
 3. Hosea 14:5

His goodness, answers his prayer. All his difficulties then vanish, his sorrows and sufferings leave him, and make room for exalted, happy states of being. "Thou didst turn for me my mourning into dancing; thou didst loose my sackcloth and gird me with gladness,"¹ "O give thanks unto the Lord, for He is good, for His mercy endureth forever."² "Out of my straits I called upon the Lord; He answered me with great enlargement. The Lord is for me; I will not fear; what can man do unto me?"³ The Psalmist's conviction of God's goodness holds within it not the slightest doubt; He feels God's goodness to be abundant and overwhelming, surpassing by far the goodness of a parent: "For though my father and my mother have forsaken me, the Lord will take me up."⁴

Finally, the attribute of justice, which general religion ascribes to God's nature, Judaism was the first to conceive and then vigorously sustain. It is difficult to turn a page in the Old Testament without being

1. Psalm 30:12

2. Psalm 106:1

3. Psalm 118:5-6

4. Psalm 27:10

confronted with the idea of the justice of God. From the very beginning to the very end of the Scriptures, there are endless demonstrations of Divine Justice. In almost every narrative there is either implicit or explicit an expression of divine justice. From Abraham to the last of the prophets, continuous emphasis is laid on the justice of God. Interceding for the people of Sodom, Abraham said: "Peradventure, there are fifty righteous within the city; wilt Thou indeed sweep away and not forgive the place for the fifty righteous that are therein? That be far from Thee . . . shall not the judge of all the earth do justly?"¹ Priests and prophets and leaders all accentuate God's justice. Because of justice, "He executeth judgments for the fatherless and for the widow;" because He is just He rewards the righteous and inflicts punishment upon the wicked; because of His justice He sent Israel into exile for its transgressions, but He will revoke the punishment when Israel returns to Him. "Return, O Israel, unto the Lord, thy God; for thou hast stumbled in

1. Genesis, 18:25

thine iniquity. . . . I will heal their backsliding, I will love them freely; for Mine anger is turned away from him. I will be as a dew to Israel; he shall blossom as a lily, and cast forth his roots as Lebanon."¹

We can find here, if we reflect, the cause for the survival of Judaism under the most adverse conditions. Judaism has survived because it contains a vital truth. It has survived for the very same reason that other truths, born in antiquity, have weathered the ages and are still fresh with us. The fundamental truth of Judaism—that within and beyond all visible existence there is One Supreme Power—has not only not been denied by the advancing ages, but has gradually been more and more corroborated by the growing understanding of man's mind. Even when philosophy endeavored to tear itself away from religion, explaining existence in its own terms, it only, at best, reproduced under a different guise the original conception of Judaism. It spoke of a uni-

1. Hosea 14:2,5,6

versal substance (Spinoza), or of a universal will (Schopenhauer), or of some invisible universal reality (Idealists). But in truth it was unconsciously delving into the nature of pure religion as conceived by the prophets and Psalmists of Israel. When a mind transcends its mundane surroundings and directs its vision towards the infinitude, the eternity, and the harmony of the world, it necessarily arrives at the realization that some One, some Power, that transcends perception, exists. When the mind also meditates upon the laws by which the world is governed, it cannot but conclude that this Supreme Power is just. Finally, when the human understanding also cogitates upon the systems and methods by which each being is sustained, it becomes convinced that this Power is also good. These realizations were first held by the founders of Judaism and have constituted the very foundation of the Jewish faith.

CHAPTER IV

ETHICS

Vital though the God conception be in Judaism, Judaism nevertheless is far more concerned with man's conduct than with the God idea. The fact that very little, almost insignificant, space is devoted in the Old Testament and in the Talmud to cosmological and metaphysical problems, while almost every page in these volumes deals directly or indirectly with some phase of human conduct, should in itself be an indication that the chief interest of Judaism is human conduct. In addition, the Torah itself is very emphatic on this point. It reminds us again and again: "And ye shall observe all My statutes, and all Mine ordinances, and *do* them: I am the Lord." "Learn to *do* good: seek justice, relieve the oppressed."¹ This is the keynote of the teachings of all the prophets. "He who devotes himself," says a passage in the Talmud, "to the mere study

1. Isaiah: 1:17

of religion without engaging in works of mercy and love, is like one who has no God."¹

From its very incipency, Judaism took up arms against idolatry and the immorality it entrained. On the one hand, it vehemently condemned heathenism and all its degrading practices, stringently forbidding any attempt to follow it. "Ye shall make you no idols, neither shall ye rear up a graven image, or a pillar, neither shall ye place any figured stone in your land, to bow down unto it."² "Ye shall surely destroy all the places, wherein the nations that ye are to dispossess served their gods, upon the high mountains, and upon the hills and under every leafy tree. And ye shall break down their altars and dash in pieces their pillars and burn their Asherim with fire; and ye shall hew down the graven images of their gods."³ On the other hand, it was also filled with abhorrence against the cruel and immoral conduct of the heathen peoples,

1. Talmud, Abodah Zarah 16b

2. Leviticus 26:1

3. Deuteronomy 12:2-3

and its prohibition of such practices was vehement. "After the doings of the land of Egypt wherein ye dwelt, shall ye not do; and after the doings of the land of Canaan whither I bring you, shall ye not do; neither shall ye walk in their statutes."¹ "Defile not ye yourselves in any of these things; for in all these the nations are defiled, which I cast out from before you."² But while on the negative side, Judaism condemned the ideals and the manners of the heathen nations, it offered, on the positive side, the monotheistic conception of God and a highly humane code of ethics.

Although occupying a more dominating place than the God conception, ethics in Judaism is intrinsically intertwined with the God idea. Man is created in the image of God—divinity is reflected in his being; hence man must endeavor to model his ways after the ways of God. The specific ground upon which man must follow God is that of holiness. "Ye shall be holy; for I the Lord your God am holy."³ The Talmud expands

1. Leviticus 18:3

3. Leviticus 19:2

2. Leviticus 18:24

this injunction: "As I am gracious, so be you gracious, as I am merciful so be you merciful, as I am holy be you holy."¹ Holiness has a dual implication; it means ritualistic sanctity and also ethical purity. By far the greater stress, however, is laid on the latter. The prophet defines God's holiness thus: "God the Holy One is sanctified through righteousness."² The very selection of Israel as a kingdom of priests and a holy nation was based on this condition: "If ye will listen unto Me."³

This theistic basis of human ethics as laid down in Judaism is of paramount significance; it not only gives man the highest possible ideals of behavior, it not only makes conduct the medium for the attainment of godliness, but it also makes virtue absolute; it lifts it out of the realm of human circumstances; it does not permit expediency or environment to mould or alter it at will; but, on the contrary, it imposes itself upon all human relationships, demanding obedience to its code. This by no means implies that there is an interference with the free-

1. Sotah 14a

2. Isaiah 5:16

3. Exodus 19:5

dom of man's will. Not at all. Man is still free to comply with the demands of virtue or to violate them; but he is not free to determine what the nature or the contents of virtue may be. This is divinely determined by the divine attributes themselves. Man is requested to deal with his fellow man in the manner that God deals with His world.

The soundness of this basis of ethics is especially realized when we compare it with other ethical doctrines, even with those of the most modern minds. The doctrine of evolutionary ethics, which is frequently entertained, and which declares that ethics are determined by evolutionary necessity, must ultimately lead to the Nietzschean ideal of man, that is, to the so-called superman. The fittest only must survive; hence the weak and the helpless have very little claim to this world; they can only serve as stepping stones for the mighty ones of the earth. Contrast with this the teaching of Judaism: "As I am merciful, so shall you be merciful;" "Care for the fatherless and the needy and the stranger that is within

thy gate." Again, the much mooted theory that righteousness, as Kant would have it, is a "categorical imperative", takes little into consideration the many weaknesses to which man is subject. For man may as easily do wrong as he may do right; he has the potentialities for both. If it is left to him, both kinds of action are possible. Judaism does not omit from consideration the morality inherent in man's nature; its appeal for humaneness and righteousness is not made to something in man that is opposed to virtue, but on the contrary, to something that sanctions and cherishes it. If the appeal for righteousness struck no answering chord in human consciousness, no injunctions or threats would avail to implant it there. Judaism, however, does not lose sight of the fact that morality in man is not imperative, that the "moral faculty" is still in the process of being moulded, that evil forces and influences can still beset it and even silence it; hence the foundation of ethics, declares Judaism, is not in man's nature, but in God's nature, in Whom love, mercy and justice are absolute.

The outstanding characteristics of the ethics of Judaism is their deep humanity. We, of the twentieth century, who consider ourselves advanced in our civilization, are still overwhelmingly impressed when we ponder over the profound tenderness and humaneness contained in the Pentateuch. We realize more and more, in fact, that its message is not less vital to us than it was to our progenitors who received it. Conditions of life have indeed changed, many of the specific instructions of the Old Testament are no longer applicable; but its spirit of uncompromising righteousness, its deep respect for every human being, its tender mercy for all creatures, its persistent demand for the happiness of everyone, must make this Book a book of guidance to us and to successive generations as it was to those of past ages.

Much has been said about Judaism's being a religion of strict justice and Christianity a religion of love. While we do, indeed, cherish a deep respect for every religion, we still cannot let this frequently repeated claim pass unchallenged, for it

entails a gross misrepresentation. Judaism is no less a religion of love than it is of justice. In fact, the concept of justice cannot exist, except side by side with the concept of love. The ethics of Judaism may well be grouped into three divisions: 1) the ethics of love; 2) the ethics of justice; and 3) the ethics of humaneness in general.

1. ETHICS OF LOVE

The ethics of love are summarized in the passage: "Love thy neighbor as thyself."¹ "Love thy neighbor," without any specifications, whether he is good and noble or unkind and base. The word *neighbor* is particularly significant; your neighbor, with whom you have no blood commonship, who may not at all contribute to your happiness, whom you may not even know well, towards him your attitude must be that of love. But love is subject to degrees; it may be intense and active, or it may reside but passively in the consciousness; again, it may take the form of real helpfulness or it may express

1. Leviticus 19:18

itself in mere sentimentalism; hence the specification, "as thyself." Love for oneself is expressed chiefly in self-preservation. The individual loves his own being and therefore keeps it from all danger, he sustains it and guards it against unpleasantness. In this manner, in a similar desire for his preservation, should the love for one's neighbor express itself.

The ethics of love are expatiated on in the sacred writings. Love precludes malice and bitterness; therefore, we are told, "Thou shalt not go up and down as a tale-bearer among thy people. Thou shalt not hate thy brother in thy heart. . . Thou shalt not take vengeance, nor bear a grudge. . ."¹ Love also precludes prejudice and intolerance, and this not only in regard to your own people, but also in regard to those of other peoples and races. The injunction to love applies to them no less than to your own. "And if a stranger sojourn with thee in your land, ye shall not do him wrong. The stranger that sojourneth with you shall be unto you as the home-born among you,

1. Ibid. 19:16-18

and shalt love him as thyself; for ye were strangers in the land of Egypt."¹ This Hebraic concept of love also precludes unkindness towards an enemy. "Rejoice not when thine enemy falleth, and let not thine heart be glad when he stumbleth."² Do not, indeed, do less for your enemy than you are enjoined to do for your other neighbors. Humanity is ranked above the differences between man and man. "If thou meet thy enemy's ox or his ass going astray, thou shalt surely bring it back to him again. If thou see the ass of him that hateth thee lying under its burden, thou shalt forbear to pass by him; thou shalt surely release it with him."³

The ethics of love demand that you sustain your neighbor; when, therefore, he finds himself in distress or in want, act towards him with the same feeling, with the same unselfishness, with the same devotion

1. Leviticus 19:33-34. Compare this attitude towards foreigners with that of the ancient Greeks who considered all outsiders barbarians; or even with the prejudiced attitude which prevails to-day among many modern nations.

2. Proverbs: 24:17

3. Exodus 23:4-5

that you would wish him to have if the circumstances were reversed. It is particularly when one is in need, or when well-being is threatened, that the expressions of love on the part of a neighbor count for most. The Old Testament is therefore very explicit as to how love for one's neighbor should become embodied in human relationship. "If there be among you a needy man . . . thou shalt not harden thy heart nor shut thy hand from thy needy brother; but thou shalt surely open thy hand unto him, and shalt surely lend him sufficient for his need in that which he wanteth. Thou shalt surely give him and thy heart shall not be grieved when thou givest unto him."¹ And again, "If thou lend money to any of my people, even to the poor with thee, thou shalt not be to him as a creditor; neither shall ye lay upon him interest. If thou at all take thy neighbor's garment as a pledge, thou shalt restore it unto him by the time the sun goeth down; for it is his only covering, it is his garment for his skin; wherein

1. Deuteronomy 15:7-8,10

shall he sleep?"¹ "When thou dost lend thy neighbor any manner of loan, thou shalt not go into his house to fetch his pledge. Thou shalt stand without, and the man to whom thou dost lend shall bring forth the pledge without unto thee."²

The ethics of love demand that care be taken of the defenseless and the weak, hence the repeated reminder that we care for the widow and the fatherless. The burden of their loss must be made as easy as it is possible for them. They must lack for nothing; they must never be overlooked, and on every occasion of national festivity, special attention must be given to them and they must be drawn into participation. As for the poor in general, not only must they be supported, but they must not be made to feel the stigma of charity. A share for the poor must be left in the field and in the orchard and they must be spared the humiliation of standing at your door and begging a pittance. "And when ye reap the harvest of your land, thou

1. Exodus 22:24-26

2. Deuteronomy 24:10-11

shalt not wholly reap the corner of thy field, neither shalt thou gather the fallen fruit of thy vineyard; thou shalt leave them for the poor and for the stranger."¹

All these are principles of conduct that can only be traced to love. They entail deep consideration for others; they call for acts of kindness towards those even who are utterly foreign and towards those even who hate you. They are acts for which one receives not nor seeks any reward; they are acts of love. We can see how utterly unfounded is the declaration that Judaism is a religion merely of justice, while Christianity is a religion of love. That the principle of love enters into the theory of the Christian religion, no one will dispute, but that Judaism is devoid of it is an assertion that can only be based on ignorance of Judaism. There is, indeed, a fundamental difference between the ethics of love established in Judaism and those upon which Christianity is based. For love may express itself in various ways. It may express itself in impulsive extravagance as is sometimes the

1. Leviticus 19:9-10

case with a highly emotional parent, or it may express itself with deep reserve, as we see sometimes in a loving guide or a devoted teacher. The love for humanity advocated in the New Testament we look upon as being of the former kind, while the love that is taught in the Old Testament is more of the latter nature. The ethics of the New Testament is summed up in these passages: "But I say unto you, That ye resist not evil; but whosoever shall smite thee on the right cheek, turn to him the other also. And if any man will sue thee at the law, and take away thy coat, let him have thy cloak also."¹ The ethics of the Old Testament are contained in the passage we have already noted: "Love thy neighbor as thyself." Or, as Rabbi Hillel restates negatively, "That which is objectionable to you do not do unto your neighbor."²

It is indeed very fortunate for humanity that no serious attempt has ever been made to enforce the ethics of the New Testament. What would have been the state of human

1. St. Matthew 5:39-40

2. Sabbath 31a

society were no attempt made to resist evil? If one were really to offer his left cheek to the one who strikes him on the right, or give up his cloak to the one who has wrested from him his coat, there is no doubt that legitimate robbery would be the order of the day. The evil in man's nature would be endlessly encouraged; the strong would despoil the weak; the selfish and the envious would readily satiate their desires; the mean and the base would have a free hand and would plunder at their pleasure. The robbed and the injured, under such a system of morality, would not even seek reparation or injustice, for non-resistance would be the social rule. The injunction of Judaism is "Love thy neighbor as thyself," but not more.

2. ETHICS OF JUSTICE

There is no sharp dividing line between ethics of love and ethics of justice; they are, in fact, closely related; they are both based on the realization of the deep affinity between man and man. However, while the

ethics of love deal expressly with acts of kindness, the ethics of justice concern themselves with acts of human rights. The ethics of love express the loftiness in man's nature, while the ethics of justice simply aim at curbing his weaknesses. Justice is therefore prerequisite to love; when man's failings are checked, his greatness has a clear road to self-expression.

Justice is fundamentally a check against greediness and selfishness. If this world had infinite treasures and endless space for each one, problems of justice and injustice would be less likely to arise; there would be enough to satisfy each man's desires and ambitions without infringement upon the rights of others. But since the possibilities of human attainment are in a great sense limited, and since man's desires are not at all subdued or even rationally tamed, justice must step in and safeguard each one's share.

Because the object of justice is to fetter human weaknesses, the injunctions of justice contained in the Old Testament are mostly expressed in negative statements;

what man should not do is more vital to justice than what he should do. (What he should do is more properly contained in the ethics of love or of humaneness in general). If one does not do wrong, justice can have no claim against him. The ethics of justice are therefore generally declared in terms of "thou shalt not." "Ye shall not steal; neither shall ye deal falsely, nor lie to one another. . . . Thou shalt not oppress thy neighbor, nor rob him. . . . Ye shall not do unrighteousness in judgment, in meteyard, in weight or in measure."¹

Justice is a divine behest. God himself loves justice and righteousness; "He established the foundations of the earth on justice," He judges the world with righteousness." Man, created in the image of God, must also practice justice and righteousness. But as human justice and righteousness is strictly bound up with the relationship between man and man, and as this relationship is subject to change and development and deepening complexity, no detailed application of justice for all generations could have

1. Leviticus 19:11, 13,35

possibly been laid down. Every age is naturally faced with human problems differing from those of the previous age. Nevertheless, although no specific regulations could be given which would apply to unknown conditions of the future, yet the fundamentals of justice could well have been and were sounded even in the early stages of human development; for they not only expressed but created the principles by which human relationships, under all conditions of life, should be governed.

Ethics of justice in the Old Testament may generally be grouped under two classes: a) general, and b) particular. The fundamentals of the general ethics of justice are to be found in the Decalogue. "Thou shalt not murder. Thou shalt not commit adultery. Thou shalt not steal. Thou shalt not bear false witness against thy neighbor." These commandments are very brief and general; they are stated without specifications or conditions. They imply, however, the sanctity of human life, the sanctity of the moral law, the sanctity of possession, and the sanctity of truth; these, therefore, should not be vio-

lated. It matters not what new circumstances may arise in human life, these prohibitions are cardinal to men of all ages.

The particular laws of justice enunciated in the Old Testament are the applications of these commandments to conditions as they existed in the Biblical age. These laws, for example, clearly define what constitutes murder and what does not. Killing unintentionally or in self-defense is not considered in the category of murder.¹ Such, incidentally, is the interpretation also of our day. Likewise does the Biblical law determine what shall be the penalty of the murderer. The various kinds of adultery and lewdness are also described in these particular laws, and the penalty for each.² The various kinds of theft and their penalties are enumerated,³ and we are also told when the testimony of a witness is to be considered false and what the punishment for such perjury shall be.⁴ It is interesting to note that no particular laws are laid down in expatiation of the commandment, "Thou shalt not covet," since the command-

1. Deuteronomy 19:4

3. Exodus 21:16; 22:1-3

2. Leviticus 20:10-21

4. Deuteronomy 19:15-19

ment itself is very explicit in its details. And no penalty is imposed for coveting alone.

The particular laws of justice treat also of damages and injuries. Here the guilt of the damage doer is determined by his motive. The apparent severity for which the Mosaic Law has been frequently assailed, "life for life, eye for eye, tooth for tooth, hand for hand, foot for foot,"¹ is due to a misinterpretation of this passage. Surely, the Law, which in another passage² makes provisions that special cities be built for those who have slain without awareness, so that no avenger could touch them, would not issue a decree of a "life for a life" taken under similar circumstances. We can only accept the Talmudic interpretation which regards this passage as simply enjoining adequate compensation — compensation commensurate with this accidental destruction of life or eye or hand, but certainly not requesting the payment of actual life or limb.

In order to render justice free from any possible human weakness, the Scriptures lay special emphasis upon the conduct of the

1. Exodus 21:23-24

2. Deuteronomy 19:2-4

judge. "Thou shalt not wrest judgment; thou shalt not respect persons; neither shalt thou take a bribe; for a bribe doth blind the eyes of the wise, and pervert the words of the righteous. Justice, justice shalt thou pursue."¹ And again, with even more specific stress, "Ye shall do no unrighteousness in judgment; thou shalt not respect the person of the poor, nor favor the person of the mighty; but in righteousness shalt thou judge thy neighbor."²

The particular laws of justice are subject to mutation, and may or may not be applicable to our day; but the general laws are eternally valid.

The prophets make the ideal of justice their chief theme. They are not interested in details of justice; decrees and laws are not their problem; these are already well established. Their method is particularly that of denunciation. They rail against the rich who wax richer at the expense of the poor; they decry the strong who crush the weak; they

1. Deuteronomy 16:19-20

2. Leviticus 19:15

hurl their pungent epithets against the insolent who abuse the meek; against judges who seek bribes and rewards, and against leaders of the people who strive only for their own interests. "Thy silver has become dross, thy wine mixed with water. Thy princes are rebellious, thy companions are thieves; every one loveth bribe, and followeth after rewards; they judge not the fatherless, neither doth the cause of the widow come unto them."¹ "Hear the word of the Lord, ye children of Israel! For the Lord hath a controversy with the inhabitants of the land, because there is no truth, no mercy, nor knowledge of God in the land. Swearing and lying and killing and stealing, and committing adultery! They break all bounds and blood toucheth blood. Therefore doth the land mourn and everyone that dwelleth therein doth languish."² "Hear this, O ye that swallow the needy, and destroy the poor of the land, saying: 'When will the new moon be gone, that we may sell grain? And the Sabbath, that we may set forth corn? making

1. Isaiah 1:22-23

2. Hosea 4:1-3

the ephah small, and the shekel great, and falsifying the balances of deceit; that we may buy the poor for a silver, and the needy for a pair of shoes, and sell the refuse of the corn.' ”¹

The prophets also declared that the flagrant and secret abuses of justice would not pass unpunished. “Your country will be desolate; your cities burned with fire; your land, strangers will devour it in your presence.”² “And I will pursue after them with the sword, with famine, with pestilence, and will make them a horror unto the kingdoms of the earth.”³ But as the object of divine justice is not vengeance, but correction, retribution is not to be everlasting. After the period of punishment shall be over, “I will bring thy seed from the east, and gather thee from the west; I will say to the north: ‘Give up,’ and to the south: ‘Keep not back, bring my sons from far, and my daughters from the end of the earth.’ ”⁴ “I will restore thy judges as at the first, and thy counsellors as at the beginning; afterward thou shalt be

1. Amos 8:4-6

2. Isaiah 1:7

3. Jeremiah 29:18

4. Isaiah 43:5-6

called a city of righteousness, the faithful city. Zion shall be redeemed with justice, and they that return of her with righteousness.”¹

The Psalmist, to whom God is the source of all righteousness, finds that man can attain perfection and the highest happiness only through the practice of justice and equity. The just is beloved of God. The just man is the ideal man. “Who shall sojourn in thy Tabernacle, and who shall dwell upon Thy holy mountain? He that walketh uprightly, and worketh righteousness, and speaketh truth in his heart; that has no slander upon his tongue, nor doeth evil to his fellow, nor taketh up a reproach against his neighbor . . . He that sweareth to his own hurt, and changeth not; he that putteth not out his money on interest, nor taketh a bribe against the innocent. He that doeth these things shall never be moved.”²

1. Ibid 1:26-27

2. Psalm 15

3. ETHICS OF GENERAL HUMANENESS

Jewish lore is rich also in the ethics of general humaneness. These entail the more delicate and sympathetic points in the relationship between man and man, and also prescribe a humane attitude towards beings, other than human, which are part of God's creation. When one of the community becomes poverty stricken, it immediately becomes the duty of his neighbors to help him. But there are many ways of helping an individual in poverty. The usual reaction of benevolent neighbors is an urge to make contributions to the fallen one. But this method of relief, while it is a helpful one, carries with it some serious defects. The recipient of these benevolences is hurt in his pride, his manhood is wounded; benefactors may satisfy his temporary needs, but their very generosity will chafe his finer sensibilities. For the more they give, the more ungrudgingly even, the more is he made to feel his inferiority to those who contribute to his support. What is more, this method of helping renders

the individual dependent, and means eventual deterioration on his part. The Old Testament therefore insists that aid be given in such a manner as to preserve the individual's manhood and independence and social station. The ideal way therefore is to help the individual to help himself. Lend him money without interest, sell him things, but without profit to yourself, feel that he is a part of yourself and make him feel it. "If thy brother be waxen poor, and his means fail with thee; then thou shalt uphold him: as a stranger, as a settler shall he live with thee. Thou shalt not give him thy money upon interest, nor give him thy victuals for increase."¹ If the neighbor who is aiding deems it necessary to take a pawn or security for his loan, he is warned not to take the tools or the business of the borrower, for these are the very means by which he must make his livelihood. "No man shall take the mill or the upper millstone to pledge; for he (thereby) takes a man's life to pledge."²

The Scriptures are not opposed to slavery,

1. Leviticus 25:35-37

2. Deuteronomy 24:6

for in Biblical times not only was slavery universal, but slavery, voluntary slavery, was often a means of escape from deep want or misery. The Old Testament, however, displays the deepest humanity in the injunctions it gives regarding the treatment of the slave. In the first place, one cannot hold a man as a slave for more than six years.¹ Then, during the period of his service, the slave must not be maltreated; he must not be humiliated, he must not be ruled with rigor.² Again, he must not be made to work incessantly, he must be permitted to abstain from work when the master himself is prohibited from working, and he must take his rest together with his master;³ his master's holidays are also his holidays, he must be made to participate in all his festivities and celebrations.⁴ Finally, when the time comes to set him free, he must under no circumstances be sent away empty-handed, lest he find himself compelled thereby to resell himself into slavery; but he must be rewarded handsomely, generously, from the goods of the

1. Deuteronomy 15:12

2. Leviticus 25:43

3. Exodus 20:10

4. Deuteronomy 16:11,14

estate that he served. "Thou shalt furnish him liberally out of thy flock, and out of thy threshing floor, and out of thy vinepress; of that wherewith the Lord thy God hath blessed thee thou shalt give unto him."¹ If a slave should run away from his master, he must be regarded as a human being, and not as a piece of property. When one happens upon another's property, when he meets with a lost sheep or ox, or finds someone's cloak, he must indeed hasten to restore these to their owner, and if the owner be not known he must keep them in safety until he becomes known;² but a slave should not be returned to his master. The fact that he fled is sufficient evidence of unhappiness endured, he must therefore be protected and made comfortable in any place where he chooses to dwell.³

Not only is humaneness required of man in his relationships with his fellow man, but also in his careship of the beast. God is the Creator and Sustainer not only of man, but of all creatures. The Psalmist especially

1. Ibid 15:14

3. Ibid 23:16

2. Ibid 22:1-3

shows cognizance of God's goodness falling over beast as well as over mankind. "Man and beast Thou preservest, O Lord."¹ "He giveth to the beast its food, and to the young raven which cry."² Man is enjoined to follow in the footsteps of God, "As I am merciful, so be thou merciful." The Mosaic law therefore enjoins a tender treatment for animals. The beast of burden must not work more than six days in the week.³ We have also this kind warning: "Thou shalt not muzzle the ox when he treadeth out the corn,"⁴ and we are told that animals of different natures and different degrees of strength must not be yoked together.⁵ When you see that someone's beast has fallen down, do not pretend that you have not seen it, but help to lift it.⁶ This humane attitude must be extended even to the most minute of God's creatures. Spare suffering even to a chance bird that you may meet upon your way. "If a bird's nest chance to be before thee in the way, in any tree, or on the ground,

1. Psalm 36:7

2. Psalm 147:9

3. Exodus 23:12

4. Deuteronomy 25:4

5. Deuteronomy 22:10

6. Deuteronomy 22:4

with young ones or eggs, and the dam sitting upon the young, or upon the eggs, thou shalt not take the dam with the young; thou shalt in any wise let the dam go, but the young thou mayest take unto thyself.”¹

The ethics of Judaism, as we have seen, enjoin love and sympathy for our fellow-men, indeed for all our fellow-creatures. One who is guided by this code places himself in perfect harmony with mankind. He regards his fellow-man not as a hinderance to his own well-being, but as a brother, as one who too is entitled to comfort and happiness, to opportunity for the expression of his personality. The application of its rules must render the individual who practices them righteous and loving and considerate; it moulds him more and more according to the pattern of attributes that are conceived as resident in God.

1. Deuteronomy 22:6-7. The purport of this passage being that the mother bird be spared the agony of seeing her young ones captured.

CHAPTER V

VIRTUES

Ethical conduct and virtues of character are inter-related, and both are essential to human perfection. However, while ethics essentially determine man's relations to his fellow man, virtue is an attribute of man's inner life; it concerns itself with the control of his temper, with his meekness of soul, with his truthfulness, and with other states of being in which his whole personality is involved more than is his conduct as a member of society. The purpose of a code of ethics is to establish harmony between man and the world; the ends of virtue are the maintaining of harmony within man himself. As virtue concerns itself primarily with the individual's private life, there is no punishment in the legal code for its violation. But the sages of the Talmud make it very clear that virtue carries with it its own reward, and its violation brings its own punishment.¹ Virtue

1. Aboth 4

leads man to a finer existence; its victories are the gains of the higher self, its joys bring satisfaction to the nobler parts of man.

The instructions for virtue have, like those for ethics, their positive and negative aspects. What "thou shalt" and what "thou shalt not" are both vital. However, as the positive here depends entirely upon the suppression or annihilation of the negative, Jewish lore lays its emphasis mostly upon the negative. Eliminate the negative and the positive will easily assert itself. Be not haughty, and you have paved the way to meekness; be not irascible and you have made room for tranquility. Man is capable of both, therefore only by conscientious self-watchfulness and control can he destroy the former and thus create the latter qualities.

The virtues upon which Judaism lays its greatest stress, and their opposite or negative aspects, may be grouped under four divisions: 1) anger and tranquility, 2) conceit and meekness, 3) deceit and truthfulness, 4) pessimism and optimism.

1. ANGER AND TRANQUILITY

Judaism holds the individual responsible not only for his actions, but also for his mental states and for his inner attitudes. Therefore both in the Old Testament and in Talmudic literature anger is vehemently scored. It is pointed out as a destructive state of mind. When man is in anger, he is not himself, he is only a distorted image of himself; his inner control has become impaired, his finer judgment stands silent, he "becomes like a city broken down without a wall."¹

Because anger is a deteriorating influence, the individual who harbors habitual anger is apt to commit many follies. Man's sins, in fact, are traced to his anger.² Anger leads to misunderstanding, it prejudices man's opinion, it perverts the judgment and brings on strife.³

Through anger even man's learning capacities degenerate and his spiritual attainments may be eclipsed. His memory weakens, his learning leaves him, and he actually reverts

1. Proverbs 25:28

3. Proverbs 3:33

2. Ber. 29b

to ignorance.¹ "He who is subject to fits of wrath, if he be wise, his wisdom departs from him; if he be a prophet, the spirit of prophecy forsakes him; if heaven allots a high rank to him, it will be taken away."²

Wrath, anger, irritability, are all degrees of the same violent and deteriorating state of mind. They not only work havoc in the realm of the mind, but they also break down the health of the body. They are often the cause of ailment and suffering³ and even of premature death.⁴ The elimination of anger is therefore proposed as a remedy for such bodily ills as habitual anger creates.⁵

Tranquility, on the other hand, is counted among the high virtues. Calmness gives man superiority and power; ⁶ it gives the understanding, the judgment, an opportunity for free action. When man is serene, he is ruled by his wiser self, and his errors are few or none.

Just as anger and irritability bring about disruption and disharmony, so does tran-

1. Ned. 22a

2. Pes. 66b

3. Baba Bathra 145b

4. Job 5:2

5. Ecclesiastes 7:9

6. Proverbs 16:32

quility, on the contrary, avert strife, and mend relationships which have been severed. Calmness preserves peace,¹ it prevents misunderstanding and misjudgment and rashness; the Talmud therefore counsels man to train himself so that he may acquire a calm disposition.²

Man shows heroic calibre when he battles successfully with himself; when he realizes his weakness and sets out energetically to correct himself, and actually achieves his end. Such a conquest is superior to any other conquest that man may make; and the one who succeeds in conquering himself is greater than he "who captures a city."³ God loves the one who is absolute master over his temper.⁴

2. PRIDE AND MEEKNESS

Conceit is a weakness in human nature which the teachings of Judaism strongly decry. Overweening pride goes hand in hand

1. Ibid 15:18

3. Proverbs 16:32

2. Taanith 4

4. Pes. 113b

with foolishness.¹ It is the fool who fails to notice the fine traits in his fellowman, but is always conscious of them in himself. While man, "created in the image of God," and "but little lower than the angels," may justly respect himself as the creation of a Divine Will, he should by no means consider himself superior to other human beings, as they too are formed in the divine image and they occupy the same position in creation as he does.

Self-pride may come with the acquisition of wealth.² Wealth may lead man to the belief that he is possessed of superior talent and power, that his riches are the result of his paramount wisdom.³ Wealth may also make its owner too conscious of his advantages over those who have less than he, and he may become overbearing and condescending to his fellowman. Moreover, his wealth may lead him to a sense of utter self-dependence, forgetting the need of relying upon God. The Scriptures, therefore, are very emphatic in reminding man that although he

1. Proverbs 14:3

3. Ibid 17

2. Deuteronomy 8:14

may achieve and acquire things, "it is God who giveth thee power to get wealth."¹ What man possesses outside of himself may be the result of his effort, of his own abilities, but these abilities that he possesses within himself are a divine gift, from a Source beyond himself; hence, pride of what a man is or has, is based on a deceptive foundation.

Haughtiness, conceit, pride, are degrees of a feeling of superiority to which man may succumb. But a man who deals proudly will be humbled,² say the Scriptures. God Himself despises the haughty and the proud.³ He Himself will mete out their punishment.⁴

Just as pride is condemned, so is meekness lauded. The special virtue of the celebrated leaders and sages in Israel was their meekness. Moses was meek "above all the men that were upon the face of the earth."⁵ King Saul's most memorable moment was that in which he "hid himself among the baggage"⁶ in order not to be called to the throne of Israel. King David, with all his victories,

1. Ibid 18

2. Proverbs 29:23

3. Psalm 101:5

4. Proverbs 15:25

5. Numbers 12:3

6. Samuel I, 10:22

never felt his "heart haughty, nor his eyes lofty."¹ Hillel was considered the meekest in his generation; in fact, he was quoted as a paragon of humility² Reb Jehudah Hanasi was regarded as the very embodiment of meekness.³

Meekness is regarded in Judaism as the basis upon which all the other virtues must rest. He who is meek fears sin.⁴ The meek does not need to despise or disparage himself or "humble himself to the dust." Judaism does not teach self-denial or self-depreciation; but it teaches that man must not permit "his heart to rise above his brethren," not even if he be a king,⁵ for the virtues of manhood found in himself are also found in all men; all men are the children of God. A man, therefore, may be proficient in all the virtues, but if he lacks meekness, he is an inferior man.⁶

The meek are rewarded for their lowliness. God loves the meek; He gives them grace;⁷ He causes them to "inherit the

1. Psalm 131

2. Sabbath 31

3. Sotah, 48

4. Avodah Zorah 20

5. Deuteronomy 17:20

6. Mesichtah Kalah Rabasi,
Chapter 3

7. Proverbs 3:34

Land”;¹ they will have cause to rejoice in God.² For pure honor comes to him who is of a lowly spirit;³ men adore those who are humble, as God Himself loves them.

3. DECEIT AND TRUTHFULNESS

God rested the foundations of the universe on truth; the very seal of God is TRUTH.⁴ Every part of creation expresses truth. When man speaks lies, he violates the very nature of his being, for he too is an integral part of creation. Lying implies a division between the tongue and the heart,⁵ it severs the unity of a man; therefore “lying lips are the abomination of God.”⁶ Lying may take on various colors; it may be a lie direct and void of subtlety, it may be a lie by insinuation, or it may be transmitted through purposive ambiguities. But whatever the nature of the lie may be, the prohibition against all lying is emphatic: “Keep thee far from falsehood.”⁷

1. Psalm 37:11

2. Isaiah 29:19

3. Proverbs 29:23

4. Yumah 69

5. Baba Mezhiah 49

6. Proverbs 12:22

7. Exodus 23:7

Certain forms of lying, such as deceit in business, is placed on a par with stealing. There is little difference between stealing with the hand and "stealing with words," in either case it is depriving another of his possessions and laying hold of something to which one has no claim. To bear false testimony against one's neighbor, renders one liable to all the penalties that one may have wished to see inflicted upon this neighbor.¹ Lies of malice, lies intended to besmirch a man's reputation, inventing and setting into circulation vicious reports that may ruin a man's standing in his community, these are ranked, in the Talmud, with the most criminal acts that man may commit.²

Falsehoods of the type just mentioned are punishable by law, for they entail hurt to a fellow man. There are other falsehoods, however, which in their nature may be harmless, but from which one must rigidly keep his distance, because they deteriorate man's nature and violate his holiness. Such,

1. Deuteronomy 19:19

2. Erachin 15

for instance, are lies and exaggerations about oneself in order to gain the esteem of others; lying flattery indulged in with the idea of ingratiating oneself with another individual; lies which have no special purpose, but which are uttered because the individual has not trained himself to be exact in his thoughts and in his speech. An habitual falsifier of this type gradually loses the confidence of others, and is doubted even when he tells the truth.¹

The prophets vehemently condemned the people not only for their cruelty and injustice, but also for their lying. Jeremiah lashes the people because "they deceive everyone his neighbor," and because "they have trained their tongue to speak lies."² Isaiah mocks the crowds of Israel, who have lost all self-respect, who boast of the fact that they can take refuge behind a screen of lies.³ Ezekiel bitterly berates the daughters of Zion because of their lies.⁴ Zephaniah prophesies that the remnant of Israel which God will save "will not speak lies,

1. Sanhedrin 89

2. Jeremiah 9:4

3. Isaiah 28:15

4. Ezekiel 13:19

neither shall a deceitful tongue be found in their mouth.”¹

In the proportion that falsehood is censured, truth is praised and extolled. Truth is the lasting order of things. Whether in the law of nature, or in the relations of men, truth must emerge with triumph. There are, indeed, times when truth is perverted, and even altogether denied, but this denial is only for the moment; in the end, “truth springeth out of the earth.”²

The man of truth is the ideal man, as God conceived him. He in whom there is no division between thought and tongue, in whom there is no pretense, who does not mislead, “who always speaks truth in his heart,” he it is who shall dwell upon the “holy mountain.” “The lips of truth shall be established for ever.”³

4. PESSIMISM AND OPTIMISM

Judaism regards optimism as a virtue and pessimism as a great weakness. Optimism is significant of man's faith and peace, pes-

1. Zephaniah 3:13

3. Prov. 12:19

2. Psalm 85:12

simism speaks of discontent and doubt. The pessimist must necessarily possess a non-religious attitude;¹ surely one cannot have faith in God and be pessimistic at the same time. God himself withdraws from the pessimist; "the Shechinah does not rest on one who is in gloom."² Pessimism makes man unsociable; it chills man's relation with his fellowman. The sages of the Talmud therefore considered it the duty of each one "to receive all men with a cheerful countenance."³

Pessimism, moroseness, worry, are foes to man. Whatever difficulties beset one, with optimism and courage they may be overcome; but pessimism predisposes man to failure,⁴ and worry destroys courage and "bends the heart."⁵ A gloomy outlook also interferes with man's well-being; it breaks down strength and "dries up the bone."⁶ As man generally worries about the future, and practically not at all about the present or the past, the rabbis of the Talmud strongly

1. Psalm 70:5

2. Berachoth 31

3. Aboth 3

4. Proverbs 18:14

5. Proverbs 12:25

6. Ibid 17:22

admonish: "Do not suffer anguish about the morrow, for thou knowest not what the day may yield."¹

On the other hand, joy, optimism, are ideals which man should strive to attain.² Joy is a divine gift,³ and man should endeavor to preserve it. "There is nothing better than to be joyful and to do good in life."⁴ Just as pessimism has an injurious influence upon well-being, so, on the contrary, is optimism strengthening and restoring. "A merry heart is a good medicine."⁵

Optimism in Judaism has none of the epicurean savor. It is not because the object of life is merriment and pleasure that man should dissociate himself from any aspect of sadness. In Judaism optimism is closely associated with faith; man should avoid worry and gloom because he must trust in God at all times and under all circumstances. "Trust in the Lord with all thy heart."⁶ "The Lord shall keep thee from all evil; He shall keep thy soul."⁷ Optimism

1. Yevomoth 63

2. Ecclesiastes 3:22

3. Ibid 3:13

4. Ibid 3:12

5. Proverbs 17:22

6. Pro. 3:5

7. Psalm 121:7

in Judaism is based on the realization that God is eternally watchful over the destinies of man,¹ and that therefore no evil can befall him while he places himself under His care. It is a mitzvah, a duty, to stand joyfully before God;² and as man is ever in the presence of God, not only should his prayers emanate from a joyful heart, but all his acts should be clothed with joy. In his association with his neighbors and in the hours of being alone, joy should be a very part of his being.³

1. Psalm 121:4

2. Lev. 23:40

3. Ber. 31

CHAPTER VI

PRAYER

Prayer is an integral part of Judaism. Prayer is the line of communication by which man reaches God. Every great character in the Scriptures depended on prayer. Abraham prayed for the people of Sodom and for the restoration of Abimelech; Isaac prayed for Rebecca; Jacob prayed for sustenance and for guidance; Moses prayed for his sister Miriam and for his people Israel; David, Solomon, Hezekiah, and all the prophets poured themselves out in prayer.

Prayer in Jewish tradition is both individual and communal; the latter, however, is of a much later era, becoming standardized after the abolition of sacrifices, being, in fact, instituted to supplant the sacrificial practices. The individual or personal prayer may be offered in one's own behalf, the communal prayer in behalf of the community or the nation. The latter commonly falls

under the ritual; our present interest is in personal prayer.

The chief object of personal prayer is petition; man seeks God's aid in things in which he is unable to help himself, but both in Biblical and in post-Biblical writings there are also prayers of adoration, of thanksgiving and of confession. A prayer of petition is based first upon the realization of God's goodness, on the understanding that God is loving, that "His tender mercies are over all His works,"¹ that just as He is the Creator of all, so is He also the Sustainer of all, and that "He upholdeth all that fall, and raiseth up all those that are bowed down."² A prayer of petition is based also on man's experience in receiving an answer to his prayers, that is, on the efficacy of this kind of prayer. "In the day that I called, Thou didst answer me; Thou didst encourage my soul with strength. Though I walk in the midst of trouble, Thou quickenest me."³

1. Psalm 145:9

2. Ibid. 14

3. Psalm 138:3,7

The efficacy of prayer is supported both in the Scriptures and in the Talmud. Every earnest supplication receives an answer. God does not desert those who trust in Him; "He is nigh to those who call upon Him in truth."¹ The occasions on which divine help is invoked must, however, always be such as to exclude instances where man can help himself. There is no answer to prayer which, for example, asks for achievement without effort, or for the attainment of possessions without exertion and self-application. Prayer cannot take the place of effort. The prayers which Jewish tradition has offered are always concerned with a situation in which man cannot help himself, or at least with the attainment of that which involves extreme difficulty.

Man may pray for wisdom. "Make me therefore to know wisdom in mine inmost heart," prayed the Psalmist. "Give thy servant an understanding heart," was the petition of King Solomon. Man may pray for joy and happiness. "Make me to hear joy and gladness."² He may pray for purity

1. Psalm 145:18

2. Psalm 51:10

and steadfastness. "Create in me a clean heart, O God; and renew a steadfast spirit within me."¹ For courage: "Thou didst answer me; Thou didst encourage my soul with strength."² For healing: "Heal me, O Lord, and I shall be healed; save me and I shall be saved."³ For delivery from distress: "The troubles of my heart are enlarged, O bring Thou me out of my distresses."⁴ For purity of tongue: "O God, keep my tongue from evil and my lips from speaking guile."⁵ And so are there prayers for every occasion in which man finds his own powers deficient for his needs. The belief in prayer is so strong that the Talmud urges one to pray "even when a sharp sword hangs over thy head."⁶

The belief, in Judaism, in the power of supplication is not based on hypothesis, it is based on real experience. Prayer in Judaism is not offered on the chance that God may hearken to the prayer, but in the knowledge that if offered earnestly and de-

1. Ibid 12

2. Psalm 138:3

3. Jeremiah 17:14

4. Psalm 25::17

5. Berachoth 17

6. Ibid 10

voutly, the prayer *will* be answered. "Out of my straits I called upon the Lord; He answered me with great enlargement."¹ There is, in fact, an answer to every earnest prayer recorded in the Bible and in the Talmud, from the prayer of Abraham to that of Hanina ben Dosa.² Divine help is not regarded as a mere possibility or even only as a probability, but as something that is sure to come. God's aid, however, must be invoked in a general way, says the Talmud; no specific details must be laid down in the requests made of Him. Such requests one man may make of another, but God has His own ways of aiding man, and His ways are superior to those of man.

The rabbis of the Talmud also maintain that man should not pray for or rely upon a miracle.³ This is significant. Here we may find answer to the objection frequently urged against prayer, that is, that an answer to prayer would involve a violation of the laws of nature, which is an impossibility, for God does not change His

1. Psalm 118:5

2. Taanith 3

3. Ibid. 20

laws. Jewish lore does not encourage prayer that begs for miraculous occurrences, or for violations of the laws of nature; but it does look upon prayer as a valuable weapon when that which is prayed for is in harmony with or in compliance with the laws of nature. Man may pray for wisdom and understanding, but these are harmonious with man's nature. He may pray for truth and moral attainments, for these too are consonant with man's nature. He may pray for courage and happiness, to which man's nature is indeed receptive and which he is, in fact, intended to enjoy. Man may pray for healing; here, too, prayer does not entail a violation of the laws of nature, but, on the contrary, the restoration of a law of nature. The natural state of man is the healthy state, and sickness is the violation of a natural law. In a sense it is similar to a request made to a physician that he aid in the restoration of the natural state, which is health.

In Judaism we find an answer to the doubts felt by many as to the efficacy of prayer. "How is it possible," many earnest

minds query, "that He who rules infinite worlds, who transcends space and time, who 'directs the courses of the stars' should in any way be concerned with the needs of this insignificant creature, man?" Such a question, instead of exalting God, as it is intended to, in reality limits Him. It indirectly ascribes to Him the attributes of a terrestrial being. It implies a limitation of God's powers, that because He takes care of vast worlds, His interest cannot condescend to the level of man. But from the viewpoint of Judaism, if God did not think man too insignificant a being to be called into existence, He does not consider him too lowly a thing to hearken to his prayer. Judaism does not regard man as an insignificant being; it ranks him, in fact, at the very height of creation. "Thou has made him but little lower than the angels and hast crowned him with glory and honor. Thou hast made him to have dominion over the works of Thy hands; Thou hast put all things under his feet."¹ His prayer, then, must surely count.

1. Psalm 8:6-7

Likewise is Judaism opposed to the view entertained by many of our modern men, even by some of our rabbis, particularly of the Reform wing, that the effect of prayer is but psychological in its nature, that it produces at best a soothing effect upon the prayerful mind.¹ It is needless to say that this attitude towards prayer undermines the very foundation of religion. It makes all relations between man and God a myth; it presupposes that God, if He exists at all, is not concerned with the trivial life of man, and that man, in praying, only "talks things into himself." These men, even if they interpret existence in theistic terms, show clearly that they have no faith in God's nearness and responsiveness, and that they have never had any actual religious experiences. They therefore speak of prayer only in terms nearest to their understanding. But Judaism maintains that the whole-hearted supplication of divine help in matters too difficult for man's unaided attainment, is something far more than a

1. See Year Book, Central Conference of American Rabbis 1930; Page 318.

psychological act, and its result also far more than a mere "soothing of the mind." Indeed, if prayer is simply a psychological process, as some of our religious leaders surprisingly claim, then prayer has no place in religion.

Prayer is inseparably connected with faith. Faith is the realization that an Invisible Power infinitely superior to my own, has a kindly interest in my life, even as the interest of a father in the life of his child. I seek His help, because I am convinced that He is ready to help me. Faith is therefore more than belief. Belief alone does not impel one to prayer. The student of philosophy may believe in God as a philosophic necessity, as a remote First Cause, but he will not necessarily have faith in Him as a living Presence, as the Father and Sustainer of all. Belief, again, is usually based on deductions of logic and on knowable facts; faith generates in man from a source which is clearly above logic and earthly wisdom; it originates in the spiritual nature of man and yearns for the spiritual Presence of the universe. When a man of

faith seeks divine aid, his prayer is free from vacillation or doubt; he knows that his supplication will be heeded.

Closely connected with prayer of petition is that of thanksgiving. Such a prayer is offered either when man realizes that his petition has been answered or when some unexpected good takes place in his life. The first prayer of thanksgiving was sung by Moses and Israel after the crossing of the Red Sea. Numerous others who experienced divine blessings left their record of gratitude in the pages of the Scriptures. The most exalted prayers of thanksgiving, however, are found in the Psalter. "I will give Thee thanks with my whole heart, in the presence of the mighty will I sing praises unto Thee. I will bow down toward Thy holy temple, and give thanks unto Thy name for Thy mercy and Thy truth."¹ "Bless the Lord, O my soul; and all that is within me, bless His holy name. Bless the Lord, O my soul, and forget not all His benefits; Who forgiveth all thine iniquity; Who healeth all

1. Psalm 138:1-2

thy diseases; Who redeemeth thy life from the pit; Who encompasseth thee with loving-kindness and tender mercies; Who satisfieth thine old age with good things; so that thy youth is renewed like the eagle.”¹

All the benedictions in the liturgy instituted by the “Men of the Great Synagogue,” are in their very form prayers of thanksgiving: the prayers before the meal and after the repast; before retiring and upon arising in the morning; before drinking water or wine, before smelling fragrant spices, upon beholding certain natural phenomena, upon hearing good tidings. Rabbi Meir, in fact, tells us that it is incumbent upon every one to recite one hundred benedictions daily.² All these expressions of thanksgiving keep the individual constantly aware of the fact that the world is sustained through Divine mercy and goodness.

Then, we have the prayers of adoration. These express wonder, admiration and awe at God’s works. Man pauses from his mundane tasks and reflects upon the immensi-

1. Psalm 103:1-5

2. Men. 43

ties, the infinitudes, the eternity of God's world, particularly upon the perfect order and harmony that prevails in the universe, and his heart becomes overfilled with praise for the Maker. "The heavens declare the glory of God, and the firmament sheweth His handiwork; day unto day uttereth speech and night unto night revealeth knowledge."¹ "I will extol Thee, My God, O King; and I will bless Thy name for ever and ever. Great is the Lord and highly to be praised; and His greatness is unsearchable. One generation shall laud Thy works to another, and shall declare Thy mighty acts. The glorious splendor of Thy majesty, and Thy wondrous works will I rehearse. And men shall speak of Thy tremendous acts; and I will tell of Thy greatness."²

There is no sharp division between prayers of adoration and those of thanksgiving. Very often they are conjoined. The worshipper meditates upon God's greatness in the universe and in the same trend of thought he realizes all that the Creator has

1. Psalm 19:2-3

2. Psalm 145:1-6

done for him individually and for mankind at large. Adoration is then fused with gratitude. "Blessed be the name of God from everlasting to everlasting; for wisdom and might are His. He changeth the times and the seasons. . . I thank Thee, and praise Thee, O Thou God of my fathers, Who hast given me wisdom and might."¹

Finally, we have prayers of confession. These are offered when the individual becomes aware of his transgressions against God. The object of confession is to ask forgiveness for sins committed. Sin weighs like a heavy burden upon the conscience of the transgressor; he realizes that his soul is marred, that his past holds him back from entering into a finer state of life. Moreover, he is conscious of the divine punishment, or rather consequences, likely to follow his evil deeds, and he therefore opens his heart to God in confession and seeks forgiveness for his misdeeds. In the outpourings of the Psalmist we find signal instances of these open-hearted confessions, welling up from the very depths of the soul. "Be gracious

1. Daniel 2:20-23

unto me, O God, according to Thy mercy; according to the multitude of Thy compassions blot out my transgressions. Wash me thoroughly from mine iniquity, and cleanse me from my sin. For I know my transgressions, and my sin is ever before me. Against Thee, Thee only, have I sinned, and done what is evil in Thy sight.”¹ “Remember not the sins of my youth, nor my transgressions; according to Thy mercy remember Thou me, for Thy goodness’ sake, O Lord.”²

Confession goes hand in hand with repentance. When man confesses his sin before God, it is not only that the heaviness of his soul may become unloaded, it is not only that “God’s anger may be averted,” but also that he should regain his untrammelled spirit, and see his way clear to a nobler life. On the Day of Atonement, confessions play indeed an important role, but the mission of the day is repentance, or the clearing of the road to a better life. In fact, atonement is made possible only by repentance. “He who says, ‘I will sin, and my

1. Psalm 51:3-6

2. Psalm 25:7

sins will be absolved on the Day of Atonement,' the Day of Atonement absolves him not."¹

1. Mishna, Yoma 8:9

CHAPTER VII

CEREMONIES

Judaism is richly encrusted with religious ceremony, significantly referred to as the poetry of religion. There are ceremonies for every occasion; not only for the Holy-days, the festivals, the Sabbath, the New Moon, the days of fast and mourning, and the days of feast and rejoicing, but also for every vital function of the day, and for specific periods during each day. From the moment the Jew opens his eyes in the morning until he retires in the evening, there are presented to him innumerable occasions for the performance of a religious deed, or mitzvah. Of course, we are not speaking now of Judaism in its reformed conception, but of Judaism in its traditional form. There are at least three incumbent periods of prayer: morning, afternoon and evening. (These prayers differ in their nature from the supplications of which we have previ-

ously spoken; they are not personal in their appeal, but are offered by the entire House of Israel at specific periods during the day. According to the Talmud, a petition or personal prayer, which may be offered at any time that the need evokes it, should not be offered at these routine periods.¹⁾ There are also ceremonies before and after every meal, there are ceremonial laws governing the very selection and preparation of foods; there are ceremonial laws pertaining to sanitation, to dress, to the rearing of children, to the study of the Law, and to practically every important step taken during the day and during the life of the individual.

The major ceremonies in Judaism either commemorate some outstanding event or mark a covenant between God and Israel. The Holy Days are "days of remembrance."² Passover is celebrated to remember the deliverance from the house of bondage. Shobuoth, "the season of the delivery of the Law at Sinai," Succoth "that your generations may know that I made the children of

1. Aboth 2:13

2. Lev. 23:24

Israel dwell in booths, when I brought them out of the land of Egypt;”¹ Chanukah, or the Feast of Lights, commemorates the victory of the Maccabees, and Purim the deliverance of our people in the days of Esther and Mordecai. The ninth of Ab recalls the destruction of Jerusalem. The Sabbath is a sign of the covenant between God and Israel;² circumcision likewise is a sign of the same covenant;³ and the dietary laws, too, designate a union of holiness between Israel and God.⁴

In the attitude towards the ceremonial law we find the deep contrast between prophetic and rabbinic Judaism. The prophets laid their most stringent emphasis on ethical conduct. The essence of prophetic Judaism is summed up by the prophet Michah: “It hath been told thee, O man, what is good, and what the Lord doth require of thee: only to do justly, and to love mercy, and to walk humbly with thy God.”⁵ The prophets, each one in his own manner, in his own style, de-

1. Ibid 23:43

2. Exodus 31:17

3. Genesis 17:11

4. Deuteronomy 14:21

5. Michah 6:8

nounce injustice and unrighteousness, and decry the want of truth and mercy and meekness among the people. The prophets, each one of them, speak in the name of the God of righteousness and mercy, Who demands that His people "walk in His ways." Each of the prophets predicts that "Zion will be redeemed with justice," and that restoration of the exiled will be made possible only when the people will rededicate themselves to the ethical law.

And just as the prophets deeply stress ethics and virtue, so in the same breath do they ridicule the zealousness of the people in respect to the ceremonial law. They become bitter when they perceive that the people substitute the ceremonial law for the ethical law, that they consider convocation and sacrifices, not love and righteousness, the means by which God is to be served. The prophet Isaiah, putting his words in the lips of God, says: "Bring no more vain oblations; it is an offering of abomination unto Me. I cannot endure iniquity along with the solemn assembly."¹ The prophet

1. Isaiah 1:11-14

Jeremiah thundered, with even greater passion: "Thus saith the Lord of Hosts, the God of Israel; Add your burnt offerings unto your sacrifices and eat ye flesh. For I spoke not unto your fathers, nor commanded them in the day that I brought them out of the land of Egypt concerning burnt-offerings and sacrifices; but the thing I commanded them saying: 'Hearken unto my voice, and I will be your God, and ye will be my people, and walk ye in all the way that I command you'."¹

Rabbinical Judaism, on the other hand, lays no less sanction upon the ceremonial than upon the ethical law. "Ceremonial laws must be followed as divine ordinances without hesitation."² "Be as careful of the smallest commandment as of the greatest."³ In fact, a far greater portion of the Talmud and of the post-Talmudic Halachic literature is devoted to the discussion of the theoretic and practical aspects of ceremonies than is given over to a consideration of ethics.

1. Jeremiah 7:21-23

2. Yoma 67

3. Aboth 2:1

It must, of course, be realized that the problem which the Talmudists endeavored to solve differed fundamentally from the one with which the prophets were confronted. The prophecies, for the most part, were uttered when the people of Israel was still an independent nation and dwelt in its own land. There naturally could have been then no problem of national integrity or preservation, for the land itself as well as the national tongue and culture, together with the national institutions, integrated and sufficiently unified the people. The difficulties in which the people then found themselves were rather of a moral nature. Israel, at the time of the prophets, suffered from the same spiritual diseases as other prosperous nations of antiquity, namely: dissipation and corruption. The task of the prophets was to reclaim the people to righteousness and virtue. Their prophecies, therefore, are filled with an unceasing call to an ethical life. The main body of the Talmud, on the other hand, was written in exile. At that period of our history, there was no crushing of the poor, or robbing of

the fatherless and the widow, or mistreating of slaves; the people were themselves captives among foreign peoples. There was no danger then of excessive luxury and its attendant evils, but only of possible disintegration, of Israel's becoming oblivious of its past and becoming assimilated with the foreign nations. The paramount problem of that epoch was how to prevent the possible obliteration of the entire race in exile. It was clearly the idea of the Talmudists to enlarge and fortify the spiritual world of the Jew so that no foreign influence could possibly lure him from his own faith and traditions. Hence they set out "to build a hedge" that would protect Judaism from the fate met by the religion and culture of other exiled nations; hence the strong emphasis on the ceremonial law. Adherence to the ceremonial law on the part of the Jew would mean that he could take no step, make no move, during any part of the day, without performing some religious observance or duty, that is, without being made aware of some bond between him and his God, or some tie uniting him with his people

and with his past. Indeed, the efforts of the rabbis were not in vain, for they actually succeeded in erecting an insuperable fence around Judaism.

With this in mind, we can understand why the ceremonial law has been frequently altered, while the ethical law has remained the same through all the generations. The ethics of love and justice and humaneness, we have not only not outgrown, but are still far from adequately living up to them; we are still striving for that goal. But the ceremonial law of today, while it may still trace its roots to the Scriptures and to the Talmud, has undergone a great metamorphosis.¹ This is due to the fact that as new conditions were met with in each land of the exile, and also with the progress of each generation, new laws had to be extracted

1. The Scriptures, for example, prohibit the cooking of a kid in its mother's milk (Exodus 23:19). This was clearly the expression of a humanitarian attitude towards the animal similar to the one which prohibits the slaying of the kid and its mother on the same day (Leviticus 22:28). The injunction was greatly altered in the Talmud (Chulin 113); after a subtle discussion it was concluded that not a kid merely but the meat of any kosher animal must not be boiled in milk; not only its mother's milk, but any milk at all, is prohibited. And further, not only must milk and meat not be cooked together, but they must not

from the old ones, in order to still keep the House of Israel within the gates of Judaism.

Ceremonies in Judaism achieved a two-fold mission. First, they created and sustained a religious atmosphere in the life of the Jew. They made his home a sanctuary, his ghetto a place of holy convocation, his whole life a mission of priestly functions. The hardships and tribulations which the Diaspora imposed upon him compared not at all with the joys that these priestly performances yielded him. The Jew therefore paid little attention to the humiliations that he received from the outside world, because in his inward soul he was never mortified. In fact, he looked down upon and even pitied his oppressors; he was the one chosen to perform all the Mitzvoth, while they spent but a poor, empty, mundane existence, in which only things material were paramount.

Religious ceremonies thus sanctified the Jew. As practically every vital act of the

be eaten together in any manner. Still later, the law prohibits the eating of food made from milk with any food made of or boiled with meat. And at a still later period, it was decreed that separate dishes must be used for meat and for milk, and that an interval of six hours must elapse between the eating of meat food and milk food (Yoreh Deah 89:1-2)

day was accompanied by some religious ceremony, the Jew learned to perform every deed for the sake of God. Everything he did was in honor of God, his food and his drink, his sleep and all his functions. From his rising in the morning until the hour of his retirement he lived for the sake of God. For the sake of God he also learned to become apathetic to want and suffering and persecution. For the sake of God he also learned to surrender himself peacefully to any affliction or tragedy that life might have for him.

The second function of religious ceremonies was the preservation of the unity and solidarity of the race throughout the Diaspora. Looking backward to-day, we marvel how, for nineteen centuries, a people scattered in all the corners of a disharmonious world could have maintained its integrity and harmony. Judging by the dicta of scientific law, a solidarity under such conditions should have been next to impossible. But if we grasp the nature of Judaism in general and of the ceremonial law in particular, we can see that there is something particularly vital in the latter to hold a peo-

ple together. In the morning hour, whilst the other peoples of the world went about their mundane tasks, the people of Israel were at worship, and all worshipped the same God and in the same tongue, in accord with the same traditions. "Hear, O Israel, the Lord our God, the Lord is One," they uttered in unison, though scattered through twenty lands. In the hour of sunset and in the evening, too, these united prayers were uttered by Jewish lips throughout the world. In all the corners of the earth was the Sabbath observed as the day of rest, and on that day was Jewry, in centuries past, united in bonds of serenity. On the days of festival and rejoicing, on the days of mourning and fasting, not one but every segment of the Jewish people were drawn into the ceremonial fold. And on the eve of Yom Kippur, to-day as in the days of yore, there stand before God praying for life and for forgiveness and for racial survival all the millions of our brethren, united in one soul. At such moments distances are annihilated, the partitions between land and land do not exist, oppression from without is utterly

forgotten, all the souls of the race are merged into one living people. Such has been the power of ceremony in the survival and integrity of the house of Israel.

There is, however, another concomitant to ceremony, which has to do with the individual's attitude towards those very ceremonies which he performs. It is too frequently the case that he mistakes ceremonies for the essence of Judaism, and thereby loses recognition of this essence. The essence, or rather quintessence of Judaism, is the realization of One divine Presence, the adherence to its ethical law, and the pursuance of personal virtues. These are divine requisites and constitute the fundamentals of Judaism. Ceremonies, as the prophets themselves have pointed out, are but the secondary aspects of Judaism; they are the by-paths, not the highways of religion; they are, indeed, the beautiful additions, but not the vital substance of faith. Ceremonies must therefore fail in their function when the Jew misunderstands their purpose and misuses them, when he mistakes them for the essence rather than the garments of Juda-

ism, and thinks that by complying with the ceremonial law, he is actually fulfilling the duties which Judaism imposes upon him. It must therefore be made strictly clear that one may be an observer of the Sabbath and of the dietary laws, and of daily worship, and yet if he is dishonest in his transactions, or slanders his neighbor, or falsifies what he has witnessed, his violations are far greater offenses against Judaism than are his observances a compliance with it. His observance is but the fulfilment of ceremonial law, his wrongs against a fellow man are violations of the ethical law, which is by far the mightier pillar in the structure of Judaism. Ceremonies must be practiced with a proper understanding of their nature and their purpose, and then, indeed, they may add greatly to the creation of a religious environment and to the cementing of the various scattered parts of the House of Israel.



PART II



CHAPTER VIII

THE PROBLEM

Judaism, then, as we conceive it to be, is the religion of the Jewish people, embracing every phase of Jewish life and consisting essentially of a specific God conception, of a system of ethics, of injunctions to virtue, of prayer for divine guidance and help, and of ceremonies. Our chief object in attempting to restate in the preceding section of this volume what we consider the essentials of Judaism is to know in our own minds what it is that we are striving to preserve. To struggle in order to preserve a set of dietary laws, or even a whole series of religious ceremonies, or an ideal of a national future in the Holy Land, is to place before ourselves a goal hardly commensurate with the magnitude of the suffering that our continuance involves. We have been mortified for centuries, we have been tortured and falsely accused and humiliated by the whole

world, and now when we ask ourselves why we have endured so many trials, we must give ourselves a much deeper reason than that we may preserve a ceremonial law or foster an indefinite national hope of restoration. These are indeed splendid ideals, and may find definite positions in Judaism, but they are not the whole of Judaism, as many seem to believe, nor are they adequate to the price we have paid. But if we can realize that we have suffered in order to preserve not only a code of religious ceremonies but also a true conception of God and a perfect method of living consisting of the highest ethics and ideal virtues, then we may feel that these spiritual entities have indeed been worth the sacrifices which the race has made for them. For no sacrifice can be considered too enormous for that which has uplifted the race and has contributed to the spiritual advancement of mankind at large. And now, too, when we are considering the problem of how Judaism can best be sustained, it is essential to ascertain in our minds what its vital contents are, so that we may best be able to guard it.

The problem of preserving Judaism is of course particularly acute in America, where the environment places no restraint upon our people. There are many who maintain, some well known scholars among them, that Judaism can only be preserved in a Ghetto, or at least in a land where the Jews might form a numerical majority. Where the walls of the Ghetto are demolished or where the Jews are in a minority, they say, Judaism is sure of decadence. In this land, therefore, where the Jew enjoys an extreme of freedom and privileges, and in addition constant contact with the non-Jewish world, Judaism, it is their contention, is at a great disadvantage.

We do not find ourselves at all in accord with this point of view. History itself does not corroborate it. During the Middle Ages, up to the time of the Inquisition, the Jews in Spain enjoyed equal rights with others, in fact occupied high positions in the State; and although they constituted but a small minority, they not only preserved their Jewish heritage, but even created masterful works of Jewish thought, from which we of

to-day still draw spiritual sustenance. The Spanish period was the period of Saadjah, Bachja, Jehudah Halevi, Maimonides, and many other luminaries who added permanently to the contents of Judaism. We therefore cannot support the claim that only a condition of forced exclusion is propitious to the flourishing of Judaism. On the contrary, from this instance of the free Spanish period, we can see that the Jewish genius asserts itself most strongly and most effectively in a free environment, and shrinks in the restricted Ghetto. Deep Jewish philosophy, inspiring poetry, soul stirring prayers, a rational systematization and interpretation of Halachah ("Yad") were the fruits of that free period. The later periods of Ghetto life produced only volumes of responsa and Halachah dealing mostly with the application of the ceremonial law to newly created conditions. There was an unmistakable shrinkage in the Jewish spirit.

Then, again, the view that exclusion is a vital condition for the practice of Judaism implies that there is a deep chasm between the teachings of Judaism and those of man-

kind at large, or that there are factors in civilization which impede the adherence of the Jew to his faith. We consider neither of these assumptions correct. There is not only no division between the teachings of humanity and those of Judaism, but the two, as we know, are closely linked together. The more humanity advances, the more is harmony established between it and the teachings of Judaism. In fact, advancement on the part of humanity entails its compliance more and more with the humane laws of the Scriptures. Nor are we conscious of any factors in the non-Jewish world or in civilization in general that must take the Jew away from his faith. Surely Christian missionary activity in its various forms is of little count—the Christians themselves consider it a failure where Jews are concerned. Surely the progress of science is no impediment to the adherence to Judaism. All the doubts and controversies raised by science as to the validity of religion, invariably entail objections merely to primitive conceptions of the deity and particularly to the idea of supernatural

intervention with the workings of nature. But even the most devout protagonist of science has not yet offered any valid ground for opposing the belief in a God who is a Universal Mind, Who is the Cause of all existence, and by Whom all reality is sustained. On the contrary, the tendency of science to-day is distinctly to embrace this God idea, first enunciated by the prophets and the Psalmists. (Witness the religious utterances of Einstein, Millikan and numerous others.) Surely, again, the practice of Judaism in the open evokes no antagonism or depreciation on the part of the civilized world. This is particularly true of America, where there is appreciation and even veneration for every earnest religious expression.

It is, however, true that while there is nothing in civilization or in modern life in general that would interfere with the teachings and practices of Judaism, there is nevertheless an unfortunate tendency on the part of many of our people to grow less devoted, less faithful, to our religion when the gates of the world are opened to them. This has particularly proved to be the case

with our people here in this country. It will be necessary, before we present our suggestions as to how the spiritual life of the Jew in this land may best be promoted and enhanced, to dwell upon the causes which, we believe, account for spiritual delinquency in our midst.

P

CHAPTER IX

CAUSES

It would be inadequate merely to observe the surface of the situation and point to one or even two minor aspects as accountable for the spiritual shrinkage in our ranks. Our rabbis have often accused their congregations of spiritual apathy, or with extreme absorption in materialistic ideals, or with an unremitting craving for worldly pleasure. But these charges, while they may depict actual conditions, are not at all causes, but rather effects, of spiritual failure. A people with many centuries of deepest spirituality and devoutness behind it, with a heritage that has withstood all the storms of the ages, does not grow delinquent unless there are deep, fundamental causes for its delinquency. We do not here deal with a flippant mind that has committed another folly, but with a sound, deeply rooted spirit that has come to a standstill in its growth, or that

has deviated from its course. What, then, are the causes for this deviation?

1. The first cause responsible for our spiritual stagnancy is the fact that Judaism has lost its vital content in the minds of our people. We have previously pointed out that Judaism embraces a supreme God conception, a spiritual outlook upon life, a code of ethics, a guide to virtue, the principle of supplication for individual aid (Psalms) and a series of ceremonies. But of all these, whenever Judaism is brought to us, it is the ceremonial aspect that is emphasized. Not that we are so deeply steeped in the practice of ceremonies, but that in thought as well as in actuality, Judaism to us here is synonymous with the performance of a number of rituals and observances. Teachers of Judaism stress the significance of the ceremonies; preachers exhort us to remain faithful to the ceremonial law; our parents of the past generation tremble lest Judaism suffer in our care, by which they mean lest we violate our traditional ceremonies; moreover, practically every text-book on Judaism devotes its greatest part, and sometimes its

whole, to a discussion of the ceremonial practices attendant upon the Jewish religion. The synagogue, supposedly the center of our Jewish life, seeks to perpetuate mainly our religious ceremonies. Our whole consciousness has been imbued with the habit of immediately associating some ceremonial practice or scene with Judaism. Jewish ceremonial practices are indeed beautiful and pleasant and inspiring; but, as we have previously pointed out, they do not constitute the essence of Judaism. They are the by-products, the savory incense of religion; they have nought to do with the conduct of the Jew towards his neighbor, nor with his inner virtue and holiness, nor with his grasp of God, nor with his ability to appeal to God in moments of need and distress—and these are the paramount elements of our faith.

It is indeed true that in the past, particularly in the Ghetto, a still greater, — far greater, in fact—emphasis was laid on ceremony than we do to-day, without hurt to the vitality of Judaism. But, in those days and places, the other aspects of Judaism

were not forgotten; the fundamentals of the faith were stressed in no less a measure than its ceremonies; they were no less a part of the consciousness of the Jew than the rituals. The Jew of the past, because of his Judaism, stood very close to His God and also very near to his neighbor. For him, moreover, ceremony performed an additional function. Barred from the world, oppressed on all sides, hunted at every step, the Jew created for himself a world of Mizvoth, which, in the world to come, would yield him those treasures of happiness which this world unanimously denied him. Moreover, excluded from the spheres of secular knowledge and wisdom, the rich mind of the Jew labored assiduously to expand more and more the realm of his religious expression; he augmented, in fact multiplied, his daily religious practices, and his intellectual zeal found expression in volume upon volume of Halacha, and in endless commentary upon the ritual. To-day, however, and particularly in this land, where contact with the rest of the world is free and constant, and where the ritual cannot be and is not

stringently observed, it is essential to shift the emphasis to the more important aspects of Judaism. Let it be clear that we appreciate the aesthetic and spiritual role of ceremony in Jewish life, but it is the other aspects of Judaism which are vital to modern life, and which properly instilled in the consciousness of the Jew will not only make Judaism a powerful influence in our age, but also make the Jews distinguished as a spiritual people.

Reform Judaism has been conscious of the undue weight laid upon the ceremonial law, and to correct the situation it has earnestly applied itself to the task of eliminating many parts of the ritual which are no longer in harmony with an emancipated racial life and with the conceptions of modern times. But Reform Judaism has achieved only one part of the task, the easier part, that of elimination; it has, however, done nothing in the direction of construction. It has made the ritual more simple, almost too simple and too meagre; it has abolished laws which it considered dissonant with modern knowledge (the dietary laws are an important in-

stance); but it has not taught, nor even made the attempt to inculcate in its followers, the higher ideals of Judaism—the ideals of stringent ethics, of uncompromising virtue, of a deep God realization. It is therefore not fortified, for it maintains itself on a negative accomplishment. If Reform Judaism had, as a result of its teachings, produced Jews of a more upright, more honest, more just, more pure, more God-conscious character, we would regard Reform Judaism as a true expression of prophetic Judaism. But to such a far-reaching effect on the life of the Jew, even the leaders of Reform lay no claim. The contributions of this movement so far can not therefore be regarded as significant to the preservation of Judaism.

2. Another vital cause for the deterioration of Judaism in this land is the utterly inadequate Jewish training to which our children are subjected. A survey has shown that the greater number of our children are brought up without any Jewish education whatever. Only 23.5% of all the Jewish children in New York City, according to a close study,¹ receive any Jewish education. What

1. Alexander Dushkin—Jewish Education in New York City

the situation becomes with the other 76.5% can easily be surmised. They grow up in ignorance of their faith, of the teachings of their sages, of the ideals cherished by their people; they drift through life without a spiritual anchor, without a vital affiliation with their own people. When reared in a favorable environment, they may grow up to be respectable citizens, but with no particular sympathy or warmth for their own people, and without any religious ideals. Of the great treasures of Judaism they have not been informed; of their history, of their spiritual leaders, of their saints and prophets and martyrs, they know nothing; all they know is that they spring from a race which is openly persecuted in ignorant countries and tolerated among civilized nations; they therefore seek as far as they may to escape a burden which they consider to be a hindrance to their advance in life. Those who are brought up in unfavorable surroundings will, without any religious training, find themselves utterly unprotected against the many temptations that are in their way, and will, in many instances,

choose a course of conduct not sanctioned by society.

Even those who do receive training in Judaism are not always given sufficient time for this part of their education, nor do they always receive those teachings of Judaism which would best implant in them a deep appreciation of their faith and best equip them spiritually to meet the vicissitudes of life. A very large number of our children receive instruction only once a week, an hour or two on Sunday morning. It is needless to point out that this is altogether insufficient for the instilling of a tradition so vast and so rich. What is worse, the subject matter taught in that hour is not at all of the nature to adequately prepare the child of this era for a religious life. I shall later indicate, in dealing with reconstruction, some of the things fundamentally necessary in the religious education of our children; but at present I wish merely to point out that the Biblical narratives of the Pentateuch, so deeply stressed and reiterated in our Sunday Schools, and consisting so largely of miraculous and supernatural events, are a detri-

ment rather than an advantage to a child brought early into contact with a world that is effervescing with scientific research and discovery.

3. Another factor that contributes to the laxity in Judaism, and this is particularly true in this country, is the fact that we have been emphasizing so greatly, from the religious angle, the communal aspect of Judaism, and have been, at the same time, neglecting those aspects which pertain to the life of the individual. Our prayers, for instance, are group prayers; they express the longings, the hopes, the aspirations of the race, but not at all of the individual. We pray for the health, for the uplift of the people; we pray for the restoration of Zion (in the Orthodox ritual), for God's return to Jerusalem, for universal peace and brotherhood; but we do not pray, in fact we are not taught to pray, for our individual well-being, for individual help and hope and peace of mind.

This aspect of religion we consider a particular need of to-day. Our life here is exceedingly tumultuous and hectic. The Jew in this land labors with vehemence and aban-

don; he passes, or rather rushes, through his days at an exceedingly rapid pace, and soon he finds himself failing in spirit and in strength. Then again, there are problems in his life, as in everyone's life, which are too tremendous for his understanding to solve; there are dilemmas growing out of our modern complex existence which are perplexing and overwhelming. In this whirlpool of hurry and strain and difficulties, there is nothing more soothing, more helpful to an individual than to be able to appeal to his Maker for guidance and for aid. This is the reason why so many Jews unfortunately crowd to the Christian Science churches; they seek there the individual spiritual help, to which the synagogue has been almost astonishingly indifferent.

In this connection it is interesting to observe that in the non-Jewish religious denominations, only those churches which lay strong emphasis upon personal religion are overfilled and have the enthusiastic support of their worshippers, while those which teach religion in a general way are quite deserted, artificial means being constantly introduced

in order "to hold" the congregation. While we Jews have different problems from those of the non-Jewish sects, the situation may also give us pause.

4. We come now to another cause, which is somewhat difficult to bring up, being delicate in its nature, but which must nevertheless be discussed, so that the truth of the problem, as we see it, may be presented, and some suggestions for its solution arrived at. We have in mind now the leaders of Judaism, particularly the rabbis of the land. Leadership, as we know, is the most vital aspect in every matter pertaining to communal life and ideals. The Rabbis, therefore, have always borne a great, if not the greatest share of the responsibility for the preservation and advancement of Judaism in Israel. The people, as a rule, follow their leaders, and when there is a delinquency among the people, there must surely be some weakness or weaknesses in their leaders.

The outstanding weakness of the American rabbinate is its utter unpreparedness to cope with the spiritual problems of our day. There is no resistance on their part to the

conditions of modern life which run counter to the sustaining of Judaism. Moreover, constant self-surrender to conditions ruins also their position as spiritual leaders. By allowing conditions to mould them instead of themselves influencing and moulding their Jewish environment, their position among their people becomes a subordinate one. Their religious authority shrinks and becomes confined to merely minor aspects of the religious life.

Again, because of their self-subordination to conditions, because of their light contributions to the spiritual life of the community, they become more dependent on their communities for material sustenance than the communities are dependent on them for spiritual sustenance. This is hardly a healthy situation for one engaged in a career of spiritual leadership. It is not sufficient for the spiritual leader to conduct himself as one of the laity; he must live a life, he must show a fortitude and strength, superior to that of his people, so that his people will take his leadership seriously and strive to follow in his footsteps.

5. There is at present another reason for our difficulty in keeping bright the armor of our Judaism, and that is the complex of racial inferiority which a large and growing number of our people have succumbed to. These victims of their own super sensitivity look upon their people through the eyes of its foes. Everything that is Jewish appears to them ridiculous and censurable; they feel secretly apologetic when their identity is revealed. and whenever they sense an opportunity to escape identification they seize it, finding deep satisfaction in concealing their origin, even as culprits delight when their guilt is not discovered. The name Jewish has assumed for them a persecutory significance; they regard it as a heavy weight attached to their personality, which prevents them from climbing into higher spheres. They would seek harmony with their non-Jewish environment by willingly surrendering their own distinctness as Jews and by adopting as much as possible the ways and modes of the non-Jew.

These men and women have not been taught to realize that the mind and character

of their own people are not in any sense inferior to those whom they admire, that the moral record of their people is in fact an outstanding one. They have not been made to see that there is no sphere of human endeavor, no enterprise of benevolence and humanity in which their own people are at all inferior to the rest of the world. They have not only not been given a consciousness of a great past, of immortal contributions to human civilization, but they seem to have no awareness even of the record of our people to-day in the activities of mankind. It is unfortunate that many of our own ranks fail to understand that by fleeing from their own people they ally themselves with the forces of prejudice and bitterness which are seeking to destroy them.

Moreover, the assimilatory ambitions on the part of our slackers have yielded them no honor. Our Gentile neighbors, it seems, are keen in detecting the color of Jewish blood, and Jewishness cannot long be concealed; our dissimulators gain nothing more than reproach for themselves and for their people. It is in human nature to respect

those who respect themselves. Men look up to those who hold their heads high, and condescend to those who abase themselves. This applies not only to the assimilators in our midst, but also to our people as a whole. If we could shake off the Goluth consciousness from our minds and face life with the courage and optimism of a free people, we would, without doubt, create towards ourselves a finer attitude on the part of the world. While we have indeed an abundance of courage and a bottomless reservoir of hope, these nevertheless assert themselves mainly on the side of endurance, but not at all sufficiently in taking our place as a distinct people among the peoples of the earth. We are altogether too sensitive to criticism, too much concerned about the opinion of our neighbors, and too backward in defending ourselves. This is a great hindrance in maintaining undiminished the integrity of Judaism.

CHAPTER X

SOLUTION

Experience has taught us that in this land as well as in other modern lands where Jewish life commingles freely with that of the non-Jewish world, ceremonial Judaism cannot be adequately maintained. In order, therefore, that Judaism may be preserved, and what is more, in order that it may wield a deeper influence on the life of our people to-day, we must shift the emphasis from ceremonialism to those other aspects of Judaism which were outlined in the first part of this work. This would entail no elimination of ceremonial practices, but would stress the application of, a) the devotional, b) the ethical, c) the moral principles of Judaism, to daily life.

a. DEVOTIONAL JUDAISM

The devotional phase of Judaism implies not only a belief in God's presence, but also a realization of His nearness and His benevolent interest in all whom He called into ex-

istence, and, therefore, in man. The emphasis here would not rest upon God as the Cosmic Mind or the First Cause, but upon God the Father of all, the Sustainer of all, to Whom man may effectively appeal for aid and guidance. Devotionalism does not require philosophising or rationalizing about God, it does not require that man attempt to grasp Him with his finite mind; in devotion, man does not even seek to be logically convinced of the Divine Presence, He knows God not through a merely mental process, but through experience. He knows that when he finds himself perplexed or in distress, and wholeheartedly offers prayers to this invisible Power, his burdens become lighter and his mind grows clearer and happier: his supplication has been answered. This, indeed, is a far more convincing proof than any ontological deduction that the human mind can possibly devise.

This was essentially the attitude of the Psalmist and sages in Israel. They conceived God both as transcendent and immanent. They conceived God not only as the Creator of myriad worlds, not only as infi-

nite and eternal, but also as dwelling within His endless creation and participating in the life of every creature, down to the most minute and insignificant. With this realization in mind, they were constantly conscious of the truth that they were not alone in the world, that they lived in the presence of a benevolent God. They appealed to Him in their need and sought His aid in their suffering, and were grateful to Him for their relief and their happiness. Hence the prayers contained in the Old Testament are for the greatest part either petitions or prayers of thanksgiving.

Although we pride ourselves on our modernity, our religious life, nevertheless, cannot be genuine and successful unless we follow closely the footsteps of these great ancestors of ours. We are not speaking now of religious ceremonies, which, as we know, are subject to change with the progress of the times, but of religious devotionism. The realization of God's presence, and faith in His goodness, are fundamental in Judaism. All our spiritual hopes, all our religious teachings, all our prayers are based upon the con-

sciousness of God's nearness and everlasting mercy. If we cannot or do not wish to follow our ancient leaders in their spiritual realization and devotion, then our whole religious life can be nought but shallow and insignificant. Of what value are prayers if we do not believe that One hearkens to them? To what purpose are our houses of worship, if we do not believe that the supplications offered within their walls receive a response? What does the hope of immortality mean to us, if no Everlasting Being is interested in our existence? What does the term God mean to us, if it only designates some remote cosmic cause or finality?

We urge the devotional aspect of Judaism especially because there is nothing in modern knowledge that would contradict it, or interfere with it. Scientific knowledge has dealt a hard blow to the superstitious elements of religion, but it unconsciously added new strength and conviction to pure religion. Modern science has cast great doubt on the existence of a God who performs preternatural acts, who violates the laws of nature, which are uniform and immutable; but it has

discovered no physical power that would account for these immutable laws, that would account for the mysterious stream of life, for the presence and progress of existence in general. Moreover, science has discovered that nature moves constantly in a progressive direction, that it travels from the simple to the complex, from the lower to the higher, from non-intelligence to intelligence, constantly toward higher goals. Idealistic philosophy, toward which the human mind is now becoming more and more strongly inclined, offers a variety of hypotheses to account for the evident progress of the world. But all these philosophical theories, from "the universal will" to the "universal mind," are only reiterating in philosophic language the conceptions of the prophets and Psalmists, who saw the Divine Mind, or God, in the heart of all existence, "renewing daily the work of creation," leading the world towards perfection. Science points out that evolution embraces every aspect of existence—every planet, every species, even every individual being (as part of the species); science itself justifies us therefore in the reali-

zation that the Divine Mind, the Cause of evolution, is concerned not only with the eternal stars and the infinite spaces, but with the life and progress of every being in creation. The Psalmist, too, conceives God as caring lovingly for the highest and the lowest, down to the least significant of His creatures.

When we speak therefore of returning to devotional Judaism, we do not speak of something which is altogether foreign to modern thought, but which, on the contrary, can find enhancement through scientific discovery. The Power that is interested in my growth and in my development, or in my evolution, is the One to whom I appeal for aid, when I find myself unable to succor myself. That Power is concerned with me, for I was called into being here in order to occupy a place in His evolutionary process.

Emphasis on devotional Judaism would re-instill in the Jew a spiritual outlook upon life. He would see the world as an abode of divinity, life as a spiritual process, himself as a divine creation. Life would then take on a higher meaning, it would hold out more than

merely material acquisition and pleasure, it would speak of self-elevation and dedication. This attitude would give balance to his mundane ambitions and desires, as well as animate his spiritual capacities to action.

The resuscitation of devotional Judaism would also give the Jew of today, as it did to the Jew of past generations, a spiritual bulwark against the exigencies of life. The Jew is by nature an extremist. The flaming devotion which he once gave to his God is now transferred to his materialistic struggle with life. Every ounce of his thought and energy is consumed in his business, his profession or his work. In or away from his occupation, he suffers the tortures of uncertain investments, doubtful enterprises or hectic dreams of further success. No wonder, then, that we have come to be a nervous people. What the Jew needs to-day is a return to the faith of his fathers, he needs the strength which comes with the realization that God, the invisible Sustainer, is always near him, that he can invoke His guidance and His aid, that He will never fail him in his just efforts.

The revival of faith in the heart of the Jew

will also banish fear from his spirit, particularly the fear of death. Fear always strikes the human heart in the presence of uncertainty. Man does not experience fear when actually face to face with a dreaded or inimical situation. At such a time he musters all his resources, and he either strikes or retreats, according to his courage and discretion; but he does not cringe. It is only when he finds himself uncertain as to vital matters that pessimism breaks into his consciousness and he pictures the outcome in dread colors, a situation which, in turn, generate the torturous reactions called fear. Faith lends stability and fortitude to the mind. Even when things appear precarious, the man of faith knows that the God whom he trusts will not desert him and that, in the end, all will be well with him. Death, in particular, has been a source of great fear and grief to mankind. Had it been an established fact that all shades of existence are obliterated by death, and death the absolute end, men would resign themselves to such a fate, and they would not hold it in fear. It is because the hereafter is not at all subject

to the experiences of the living, it is because of the uncertainty which no human prevision can dispel, that man is gripped with fear when his mind dwells upon his ultimate future. Faith removes this fear as it shatters all the other fears from the heart of man. It attributes no less reality to the future than to the present. Faith assures man that God did not call him into existence in order to destroy him, but that His goodness is active in the hereafter as it is here. Death, in the conception of Judaism, is but an elevation to a higher state of being; what we call death is only an ascension to a realm which is free from terrestrial hindrances. The God whom we trust with our life here, we trust also with our hereafter; there is hence nought to fear. "Though I walk through the valley of the shadow of death, I will fear no evil, for Thou art with me," said the man of faith.

b. ETHICAL JUDAISM

In order to strengthen the buttresses of Judaism in this land it is not only vital to bring back to the Jew his religious devotion and faith, but also to impress upon him more

vigorously the ethical responsibilities that his religion imposes upon him. This does not imply that the Jew to-day is, in any sense, inferior in his ethical conduct to any other people. Indeed, this is not at all the case. But the Jew is a God-chosen people; he was selected to live a superior ethical life; his ethical conduct must stand out among the nations.

In the past the ethical distinction of Israel was well established. Even his bitterest foes found nothing in his ethical life to assail. Very seldom indeed was a criminal to be found in his ranks. Although confined within the walls of an overcrowded Ghetto, although left to themselves with but the scantiest resources for their maintenance, yet the uprightness, the integrity, the humanity of the people, never suffered the least impairment. In addition to his strict adherence to the ethical teachings of the Torah, the Jew, in the not distant past of exclusion and suffering, seemed to have developed a deep tenderness for his fellow man; hence his conduct was above reproach even in the eyes of his most scrutinizing critics.

Modern life has in a measure interfered with the ethical stringency by which the Jew has governed his life. The Jew has caught the spirit of modern life; he has received its enlightening and salubrious influences as well as its doubtful and derogatory ones. Violations against the ethics of Judaism differ not, in the main, from violation against the civil ethics of modern society; for civilization has adopted the spirit of justice and righteousness enunciated in the Old Testament and has incorporated it in its law. While the number of violators of the law among our people, is, according to statistics, rather less in proportion than those of other peoples, yet it is altogether too great when we consider the scrupulous integrity of our fathers who reared us, and particularly when we remember that we were selected to live a life of purity and justice, and that to us was entrusted the eternal Law of righteousness. If Jewish names are found among those whose honesty is questioned, if some are found even among fugitives from justice and among inmates of prison houses, we may be assured that the vital teachings of our faith have

been woefully neglected, and that the powerful reins of our ethical traditions have been too greatly relaxed.

It is our firm belief that if Judaism is to survive, it will not be on the ground of its past glory, but on its efficacy in our present life. If Judaism will no longer mould our daily conduct, if it will not influence our relation with our neighbor, if it will not make us more honest with the world and with ourselves, if it will not make us zealous for righteousness and uncompromising defenders of humanity, then we may as well admit to ourselves that we of to-day, in spite of our frequent declarations of allegiance, are only hastening its banishment from actual life. For ethics and Judaism are inseparable; violations of conduct are infringements upon the very essence of our faith.

The survival of the Jew as well as the survival of Judaism depends therefore essentially upon the practice in daily life of the conduct prescribed in the code of Judaism. Judaism will continue to stand out among the religions of the world, if the Jew will be distinguished among the peoples for his scrupu-

lous integrity and righteousness. Judaism is only an ideal—an ideal of a lofty life; the Jewish people is a group selected for the materialization of that ideal. If this group fails in its function, the ideal will depart and the group will dwindle and gradually dissolve.

The Jew must live a life of righteousness even in the midst of unrighteousness. He must keep aloof from corruption, he must fortify himself against the influences of evil, and live the ideals of his religion. To carry out this end he need not separate himself from the world; he may indeed dwell in the very midst of the diverse masses of mankind and participate in the worldly progress, and yet carry about him an atmosphere of absolute uprightness. He must worship uprightness with no less devotion, with no less zeal, than he worships God. In fact, his God can only be worshipped through uprightness. The Jew must be ready to make sacrifices, if sacrifices be requested, in the realization of the ethical teachings of his faith. He must at all times let integrity be his dictator, even in the most complex moments of his life.

In the early part of this volume we pointed

out the outstanding aspects of Jewish ethics with the idea of showing that not only has Judaism not outlived its usefulness and grown obsolete, but that its teachings are so deeply humane, its message so far reaching and its ideals so keen and ennobling that it will take endless centuries before they ingrain themselves in the consciousness of humanity. Civilization has, indeed, made gigantic progress. It has augmented human knowledge in large measure, it has delved into the depths of the sea and explored the remote heavens, it has discovered and utilized the forces of nature in a manner undreamed of by earlier ages. But in humanity, in the just and tender relationship between man and man, it has made no progress at all. The acts of unrighteousness and crass corruption which we encounter in our age are not less in magnitude than those denounced by the prophets of old. The teachings of Judaism are as vital and as needful to-day as in the days when they were first delivered to our people. What humanity needs to-day is a perfect example of upright living, an actual demonstration of the teachings of the Bible.

A life in which the ethics of Judaism are unswervingly followed, will, therefore, not only lift our people to a lofty level, will not only furnish them with an ideal for which to live, but will also demonstrate to mankind that the prophets' vision of a just and upright world need not be looked upon as a mere dream, but that it is within the reach and practice of every people.

Our strict adherence to the ethics of Judaism will, without our seeking it, have the effect of lifting our standing in the eyes of the world. If our neighbors discover that honesty with us is a religion, that our integrity is immovable, that our motives are clear of pettiness and gross self-interest, the name of Jew will advance to a place among the things held high in the esteem of humankind.

c. VIRTUES IN JUDAISM

In addition to the practice of the devotional and the ethical, Jewish life cannot be complete until the Jew learns also to embody in his conduct the virtues urged by our seers and sages. The devotional will establish his

contact with God, the ethical will bring him in ideal relationship with his fellowman, the virtuous will bring peace and harmony in the realm of his inner life. I mentioned in a previous chapter that the virtues upon which Jewish lore lays great stress are: tranquility, meekness, truthfulness and optimism. We can readily see what a splendid type of manhood the Jew would present if, in addition to the other aspects of Judaism, he incorporated also these virtues in his daily life.

In the midst of the intensity and excitement with which life in America effervesces, a tranquil peaceful disposition would be of surpassing value. Men do not achieve more, in fact they achieve less, when in an excitable state. Their judgment does not work accurately, nor does their mental vision focus clearly; their energies soon become exhausted and they find themselves with nerves weakened and disordered. This has been particularly true of the Jew in this land. He has been laboring with so much intensity, he has been throwing away such great volumes of vital energy, that even when his goal of material success has been achieved, he is con-

stantly restless and miserable. It is needless to point out that this agitation and excitement have benefited him not at all; he is only undermining thereby the health and strength of the race.

Tranquility would, in the first place, give a finer tone to his personality; it would make him self-possessed, poised and better fitted for social contact with his fellow-beings. In addition, a serene state of mind would better enable him to face and solve the problems which his life must hold for him; it would conserve that which excitability destroys. The nerves of the race would retain their vitality, its energies would be kept intact, and the health of the present as well as the coming generations would be preserved.

As for the virtue of meekness, not much needs to be said; for the Jew as a people is not proud or haughty. Yet there is an unpleasant ostentation manifested in certain circles within his ranks. This is particularly the case with some who have met with material success and attempt with their wealth to imitate only the outward aspects of civilized living. Pretentiousness and display are

always unbecoming and even loathsome, whether they express themselves in speech, in dress or in manner. It is necessary for the unreserved among us to learn that there is nothing in wealth to make man proud, that gold is valuable only when it serves as an instrument for good, that when it only causes the heart of its possessor to swell, it is an evil weapon, destroying character. Moreover, they must be made to realize that their neighbors, who are always observing them, will respect them much more if they act unassumingly, making no attempt to evoke admiration, envy or recognition.

Truthfulness is another cardinal virtue which the founders and teachers of Judaism have tried to impress upon the consciousness of the Jewish race. Truth is the key to character; it is deeply respected, even by those who lie. Men and women to whom truth is a religion are not only trusted without reservation, but are also boundlessly honored. In a world of business and keen competition there are great and frequent temptations to deviate from the truth. Falsehoods and misrepresentations are even regarded by many as

business necessities. Yet nothing is more repellent to men of character than lies sanctioned by business exigencies. Although, without doubt, the Jew is no less honorable and truthful than the non-Jew, yet because he is more watched and more quickly censured, his regard for truth and honor must be of supreme degree. I would like to see the Jew as a whole people stand out in the eyes of the world as the exponent of truth in man's dealings with his fellow men. A religious faithfulness to truth would yield this result. Moreover it would yield him spiritual satisfaction, it would lend dignity to his personality, it would evoke the respect even of a hostile world.

Finally, optimism. This virtue is stressed in Judaism, because it is so closely intertwined with faith. We have seen previously that despite his harrassing experiences, more painful than is the lot of average man, the Psalmist never lost hope, was constantly sustained by his faith in God's goodness and help. This has always been the attitude of hope and optimism, induced by faith; and this is what the Jew of to-day must be taught

to adopt. It is not difficult to be optimistic when things are well and the future is promising, but it is difficult when things are awry, when illness and calamity are close at hand, and the future holds no prospects. Yet it is at those very times that we would urge optimism upon the Jew. Faith in God that all will be well, that His goodness and mercy will never fail, is one of the outstanding teachings of Judaism. Out of his faith, the Jew must forge an armor of optimism to withstand the assaults of life.

WHY WE REMAIN JEWS

We have observed that Judaism is essentially a life philosophy, containing an ideal method of living and given to the children of Israel that they may live by it. Judaism was created for the Jew, and the Jew was selected for Judaism. It is therefore unthinkable to attempt to preserve Judaism other than through the conduct and thought of the Jewish people. The problem of the preservation of Judaism will be solved when the Jew learns again to think in terms of

spirituality, to conduct himself in accordance with the ethical laws of Judaism, and practice the virtues stressed in his faith. Our distinction as a people must not rest on what our fathers did, not even on the teachings of our Testament alone, but on the influences which we ourselves absorb from our past, and on the teachings of our faith which we consciously and conscientiously are making a part of our life to-day.

Why do we remain Jews? Reform Judaism answers because we have a mission to perform, we must carry to the world the ideal of justice and righteousness. There is, it seems to us, a great arrogance in this assumption. Have the nations appointed us to be their teachers of justice and righteousness? Or have we appointed ourselves because we feel ourselves superior in uprightness to the rest of the world? Or shall we consider ourselves the mentors of the world to-day because our ancestors issued the Book of Books? The Scriptures have long since become the property of the world; the Gentiles, in fact, have been studying it more diligently than our own

people; Gentile scholars have, in recent years, contributed more to its interpretation and analysis than our own teachers. Besides, can we claim to be teachers of righteousness because our progenitors aspired to righteousness, while we ourselves practice it no more than the rest of the world? That the Jew needs a mission which may in a measure answer for his distinct existence as a people no one needs question, but that the mission generated by Reform Judaism is not at all pertinent is equally obvious to many of us.

Why do we remain Jews? The adherents of Zionism answer because we believe in our national future, because the Jew will again be established in the Holy Land, where he will again take his place among the nations of the world, and will again give expression to the unique powers of his soul, unhindered and unmolested. This is indeed a beautiful hope. But, in the first place, Zionism has essentially to do with the future of Israel, and centers itself mainly upon life in Palestine, while it holds out little to the Jew of the present here and in all the other

lands. Furthermore, while Zionism seeks to satisfy definite vital needs of the Jewish people, and as such is worthy of the co-operation of every Jew, yet its chief object is only to solve a Jewish problem, the problem of the Diaspora, but not to account for our very existence as a separate people.

The answer to the question of why we are a distinct people is that it is our function to live a distinct life, a life that must represent the embodiment of the teachings of Judaism. It must be a life of deep religious devotion, of scrupulous ethics and of absolute virtue. We may indeed cherish other ideals, we may indeed endeavor to solve the problems which our peculiar position in the world forces upon us, we may stringently adhere to the traditional ritual, or we may alter it to make it more harmonious with modern life. But these constitute only the by-products of Judaism and not at all its essence. In its essence there is only conduct and faith. And the practice of Judaism, in its essence, is the only valid reason for the continuance of the Jewish people.

PART III



THE METHOD

We have stated our view that the embodiment of the teachings of Judaism in the daily life of the Jew was the only way by which Judaism could be preserved. The next question that naturally presents itself is concerned with the method by which this could most effectively be materialized. In order to emphasize, in fact, bring about, a certain order of living, particularly an order which transcends that of the environment, not one suggestion or one course of procedure could possibly suffice, but all influences, every possible agency, must be continuously utilized in order to effect such an end.

CHAPTER XI

EDUCATION

The paramount agency by which Judaism may be instilled in the consciousness of the Jew is, beyond doubt, education. "The ignor-

ant," in the words of our sages, "cannot be religious." Ignorance will lead to superstition or to atheism, but not to pure religion. Pure religion results from knowing God. Also, if we initiate the rising generations into the practices of our faith, then "when they grow up they will not depart from it." This last supposition may at first appear merely theoretical; for any one of us may at this very moment recall instances where children initiated into and brought up in the tenets of Judaism, left it as soon as they attained a state of maturity and independence. This is without doubt true, but our claim is that these children of ours had not been receiving the *proper* Jewish training. They were taught, as Judaism, something which had no practical place in life, or which was even antagonistic to the understanding and thought of our day.

Not at all in the spirit of criticism, but with a desire simply to be helpful and constructive, let us take a panoramic view of our Jewish schools and observe their teachings and their aims. In the main, there are three types of schools for Jewish education:

1) the orthodox school or Cheder, the object of which is to teach the child the reading of the Hebrew prayers, to initiate him in the minutiae of the ritual, and in general to transmit to him the customs and traditions practiced by his parents; 2) the Hebrew school with a nationalistic ideal; here Hebrew is taught, not particularly with the object of enabling the child to read the Hebrew prayers, but with the idea of making Hebrew a national tongue; in this school, the national aspects of Jewish life are stressed, and the ideal of Zion strongly implanted in the child; 3) the Sunday School, which generally occupies the brief time allotted to it with teaching the stories of the Bible and the nature of the Jewish Festivals and Holy Days, practically no Hebrew being taught; this type of school is usually connected with the Reform temple.

As far as we know, the first type of school, the Cheder, has contributed very little to the preservation of Judaism in this land. The children are taught to master the reading of the Hebrew prayers, but of what value is that to them in their mature

years? In the European habitations from which the parents of these children usually have come, the reading of the prayers in Hebrew was the fundamental requirement in the education of the child. There, as here, the child was taught the reading of the Hebrew, but not at all the meaning of what he read. Such a method was undoubtedly faulty even over there; but there, at least, it served a specific function in Jewish life. For the Jew there considered it incumbent upon him, as an essential part of his Jewish living, to recite the prescribed prayers three times a day, and these prayers were of course in Hebrew. The child, by learning the reading of the Hebrew, was thus prepared to meet a necessary function in his daily life. But here, this method of educating the Jewish child in Judaism is utterly inadequate. In the first place, the Jew in this land, even the very father of this child, the immigrant who in his community in the Old World ranked high for his piety, has himself relinquished the custom of daily praying; he not only does not pray three times a day, but not even once.

His son, born in this land, in an environment which has none of the impressive devoutness with which his father was surrounded in his earlier years, can surely not be expected to utilize his reading ability in Hebrew for the pursuance of the daily prayers. Moreover, the child is taught the reading of a language with no other aim than the acquisition of reading ability. This is such an unusual procedure for a child who attends a modern public school, where the significance of things, particularly of words in a language, precedes even the mastery of their reading, that he very frequently rebels against the Cheder, and must be forced to attend his Hebrew sessions. He is forced, but he cannot be forced very long.

I need not add that this type of school, which great numbers of our children are still attending, has helped very little the growth of Judaism in this land. It has, in fact, helped to raise rebels against our faith. We are all aware of the fact that the early impressions are the most vital in the life of an individual, and that the inscriptions made upon the pliant, tender mind of the

child are not easily obliterated, and they count most in his later years. What sterile seeds are here implanted as religion, and expected to yield a supply of spiritual inspiration for all the days of his life! It is an education so strange, so difficult, so forced, that the child rejoices when he becomes free of his burden. (And this is usually achieved at the age of thirteen, when, according to tradition, religious responsibilities should really begin.) No wonder that we have no American-born Orthodox Jewry to speak of, I mean one consisting of men and women born and reared in this land who *choose* to follow orthodox traditions and observances. On the other hand, we have entirely too many atheists, free-thinkers, religious insurgents of many varieties, coming from orthodox homes; which indicates that their religious foundation was entirely unsound. It is clear that there is a situation here which requires thoughtful attention.

As for the Hebrew schools with a national purpose, there are indeed far more favorable observations to be made. They, at least,

endeavor to teach Hebrew as a living tongue; they, at least, endeavor to instill in the child loyalty to his people and the hope of Zion. The weakness of these schools, however, lies in the fact that while they make a strong attempt to build a racial consciousness in the child, they are not at all concerned with the child's religion. They are interested in the Jewish people, but not in the God of Israel. Our children, under such a system of training, would grow up with a group consciousness, but not with any religious consciousness. To them Judaism would be identified with the Hebrew tongue, with defence of inimical assaults directed against their people, with the up-building of Palestine as a national homeland. But, while these are valuable assets indeed in the realm of Jewish idealism, they do not constitute Judaism, nor can they, in any sense, be substituted for Judaism. Judaism means the religion of Israel, with its devotional, virtuous and ethical demands; and Zionism embraces none of these in its domain.

Let us reiterate here that we cannot

regard the preservation of the Jewish people as an end in itself. If the Jew is to be preserved, it must be with a definite end in view, and that, none other than the realization of Judaism in actual life. When Moses redeemed Israel from Egypt, his goal was achieved when he brought the people to Sinai and delivered to them the Ten Commandments. According to the Torah itself, the Promised Land was given to Israel that it might have a land in which to carry into reality the teachings of the Law. The preservation of the people and the striving for Palestine to-day must be prompted by a purpose none other than that. What is there in the Jew that may be regarded as superior and worthy of preservation at all costs, what is there but Judaism? What is the significance of the Hebrew tongue in this land other than to bring us in direct contact with the thoughts and emotions and aims of the prophets and Psalmists and sages of Israel? What is there in a Zionism that is apathetic to Judaism but a mere acquisition of the Holy Land as a hoped for place of refuge for those who are constricted

in the Diaspora? No, whether we consider the present or the future of our people, we cannot think of the Jew as independent from Judaism. Our Hebrew schools that emphasize nationalism alone, are only partially fulfilling the task that should be theirs; the greater part of the work is being left undone.

Moreover, the emphasis upon Zionism in the school, must necessarily bring home to the child, at entirely too premature an age, the fact that he belongs to a persecuted people. To impress Zionism upon him it is necessary also to impress him with the idea that his race is deeply oppressed in some parts of the world, ridiculed and despised in others, and, among many of the more enlightened nations, merely tolerated. This awareness of anti-semitism at a tender, impressionable period, is distinctly dangerous to the healthy-mindedness of the Jewish child; awareness of prejudice may breed in him feelings of inferiority, of separateness, even of resentment. Of themselves, children would take no note of discrimination, would be unconscious of it even where

it is present. Then why lay the ground for timidity and reticence in their consciousness? Why should our children in this free land be hindered from growing up in absolute freedom? Here our aim must be to rear a free, courageous, vigorous, though deeply Jewish, generation. No need, then, to accentuate prejudice long before they are called upon to face it. They must indeed learn of the suffering of their people in other lands, but not while their understanding is immature and not before their character and personality are formed; there will be time enough when they are actually capable of joining their efforts in helping to solve the historic Jewish problem.

As for our Sunday Schools, the third agency for Jewish education in this country, we need only observe the generation it has reared in order to judge of its efficacy. Those of our men and women who received their Jewish training only in the Sunday School, are marked for their woeful lack of knowledge in all matters pertaining to Judaism. Our Jewish Sunday Schools are essentially copies in method, not of course

in subject matter, of the Christian Sunday Schools. It teaches the child the stories and the history of the Old Testament, also some of the Jewish customs and traditions, and no more. While this type of religious training may be adequate for the rearing of a Christian generation in a Christian environment, it is utterly insufficient for the bringing up of a Jewish generation in the same environment. Our Sunday School products have so little knowledge of their own traditions and religion that, while they are usually proficient in worldly knowledge, they are utterly helpless in matters pertaining to their own faith. It is for this reason that they often show indifference to their faith and their people. It is for this very reason that they are often tempted to disguise their identity in a surrounding which they suspect to be unfavorably inclined towards their people. It is for this very reason, too, that many of them are misled to worship at the shrines of non-Jewish faiths such as Christian Science, New Thought, etc. The Sunday School could indeed serve a very useful function as an auxiliary agent, but not as

the only or main source of Jewish education. Its time is too utterly limited and its schedule therefore extremely restricted; it is entirely too inadequate a medium for the transmission of so rich a tradition as ours and for the fortification of a soul against many adverse influences.

CHAPTER XII

TRAINING OUR CHILDREN IN JUDAISM

Before outlining a program for the training of our children, let me repeat that if we wish to make Judaism a vital factor in the life of our people, and preserve it for the generations to come, we must make the training of our children in Judaism universally incumbent, and a most fundamental requirement of our Jewish life. We have previously noted the grievous fact that only about one-fourth of our children receive any Jewish training at all. What, under these circumstances, will become of our greatest majority when they mature? What will become of their posterity as far as Judaism is concerned? We are Jewishly active in many other respects. Each Jewish community is so organized as to take care of its Jewish dependents. Each Jewish community has its synagogues, and often its Jewish recreational institutions, and yet

there is no concentrated effort to initiate every Jewish child into the teachings of Judaism. The Talmud considers the teachings of the Torah the greatest of all the Mitzvoth, greater even than charity.

Our children must be impressed with the teachings of their faith and the traditions of their people, and not be left to discover that they are Jews by those who discriminate against them. They must first be united with the soul and with the past of their people, and then, no matter how the world should receive them, they have already been inseverably bound by the deepest that is in them to the deepest traditions of their ancestors. When they shall be made to know what Judaism is, and when they shall be made conscious of their own responsibility as its bearers and defenders, no unkind influence from without will at all count in their lives. We therefore repeat again that every Jewish parent in particular and every Jewish community in general, must, both for the sake of Judaism and for the assurance of happiness which they must surely wish to provide for their children, do

their utmost to give every Jewish child an opportunity to receive training in Judaism.

As for the contents of this training, we shall do best to refer to the Torah itself. "Thou shalt teach them diligently unto thy children," the Scriptures enjoin us. What are the great truths that we are commanded to transmit to our children? They are stated in the passages just preceding the one here quoted. "Hear, O Israel, the Lord, our God, the Lord is One. . . . And thou shalt love the Lord thy God with all thy heart and with all thy soul and with all thy might." The greatest lessons that we can impress upon our children are those of faith. A Jewish child must be taught the presence of God, His oneness, His goodness, and His righteousness. God must not be presented to the child only as an historic Reality, as the God of the past, as the God of our fathers; He must be given to the child also as a present Reality, as the child's God, as our God to-day, Who sustains and loves and guides to-day as He did in the days of the remote past, a God to whom every one to-day, and the child, too, may have access no

less than did our forefathers of ancient days.

Moreover, the religion which we present to the child must be that which satisfies our own highest conceptions. An idea of God which contradicts the findings of science, or which contradicts our own individual experiences may prove fatal to the child's faith in his later years; while a God conception which is in harmony with our more mature knowledge and understanding and which does not controvert the truths that modern science has brought us, will prove a source of great blessing to him. In childhood, the soil in which religious teachings may be implanted is exceedingly fertile; the craving for God is, in childhood, exceedingly potent; the imagination is both rich and ravenous, and if the seed sown is sound and wholesome, it will indeed bear nourishing fruit. It is therefore essential that no religious conception be instilled in the child which, at a mature age, he will regard as fabulous or preposterous.

Here our stand is directly in opposition to the method pursued in our religious schools. The religious instruction which

the child in these schools has hitherto been receiving has consisted mainly of Biblical narratives. The teacher of religion, believing the child incapable of comprehending the salient truths of faith, has instead fed the young imagination with the miraculous stories of the Bible. These do, indeed, gratify the child's imagination and evoke a glowing response; but the conception of God which the child forms from these tales is that of a great Miracle Worker; and when he reaches that stage of growth where the imagination recedes and reason takes its place, he rebels against teachings that are not acceptable to his rational mind. What is more, as the child advances into youth, and is initiated more and more into the knowledge of the world as the mind of to-day perceives it, he becomes aware of the immense contradiction existing between the conceptions instilled in him in his childhood and those he is receiving now in his youth. In childhood he learned that God created the world in six days, in the higher schools he learns that all existence is the result of an endless evolutionary process stretching

over millions of years. His innocent mind becomes perplexed at this taste of the fruit of the tree of knowledge; a deep struggle follows in the depths of his consciousness, and finally with a determined mind he goes in quest of truth. Seizing upon the impossibility of a world created in six days, of man breathed out of the dust, of woman derived from a rib, and of many other uncommon occurrences which had once been truth to him, his mind works onward to the conviction that the cosmos transmitted to him in his childhood and unquestioningly accepted by him, is at variance with scientific law. Soon the reality of the very deity, the creator of the miracle-built world of his childhood, is brought into question. And in his groping search for truth, the youth pitifully arrives at a denial of God.

In our first chapter we called attention to three distinct conceptions of God found in the Old Testament: the poetic and the primitive, as found in the Pentateuch, depicting God as the great Miracle-Worker; the much higher conception found in the

utterances of the prophets, who saw God as the transcending Source of all reality, the Maker of law and order in nature, the Cause of all causes; and the still higher conception held by the Psalmists, who conceived of God as not only the Creator of all, but also the Sustainer of all, saturating all reality, by Whose love and continued care all life, all existence, are made possible. It is our conviction that in order to lay an unshakable religious foundation in the youth of to-day, it is essential to eliminate from their early religious education all the primitive conceptions of God and of the world, which are to-day so strongly stressed in the contents of the child's religious instruction. In place of the conception of God found in the first section of the Bible, a conception which they must soon outgrow, and with consequences disastrous to their religious fidelity, we must implant in them the God conception held by the prophets and the Psalmists, which nothing in science or in human experience can contradict, but which, on the contrary, is in perfect harmony with modern thought, and toward

which, in fact, the modern mind is constantly traveling for its solution of the ultimate problems of existence.

We need not harbor any fear that the lofty and perhaps somewhat abstract conceptions of our seers may prove incomprehensible to the unripe understanding of the child. These, indeed, may be made very simple and comprehensible; and besides, it is far better that the child should strain his imaginative powers in the comprehension of religious truths that may be above him, than that he should revel in fantastic myths which he will soon cast aside. It is true that the child's fancy may of itself create a God invested with attributes after his own likeness; but that which the child's imagination itself creates is not sustained by the influence of authority, and therefore vanishes with the growth of his mental capacity, making room at the same time, for a clearer understanding of the God-reality. But to give a child legends and folk-lore, to fill his mind with miracles and supernatural manifestations, and tell him that that is religion; to give him an anthropomorphic

mental image and tell him that that is God, is to pave the way for his embracing of atheism in later life.

The Jewish child must also be taught to pray. We do not at this moment refer to the liturgical prayers, although these too are exceedingly vital, but we particularly mean the habit of appealing to God silently in moments of difficulty and distress. The cognizance of God's presence alone will not make a mind religious. It will indeed answer many perplexing problems pertaining to existence, but it will not of itself make man conscious of his relation to God, or of God's relation to him, until he expresses himself in personal prayer. It is not our purpose here to discuss again the efficacy of prayer, but religious experiences teach us that earnest prayer brings relief to a heavy heart, animates a depressed spirit and yields courage and optimism; in consequence, it brings man nearer to God. The Jewish child must be initiated early in personal prayer; he will then be spiritually fortified against the onslaughts of life. The knowledge of God's nearness and love will be a shield and

a fortress to him in the dark moments of his life.

The teachings of Jewish ethics and virtues are also imperative in Jewish education. The child's first lessons in honesty, in uprightness and in truth must come to him through the channels of religion. Society will soon impress these demands of conduct upon him, society will soon show him the penalties for their violations; but these ethics receive a much deeper significance when taught in the light of divinity than when taught in the light of human necessity. That the divine law requests a just and a sincere and a humane relationship between man and man is far more meaningful and effective than when such a relationship is prescribed by the law of man. Ethics and virtue bearing the divine stamp become sanctified; to the Jew they become a token of the covenant between him and his God.

In the general scheme of child training, there is no particular agency that has for its special task the cultivation of the moral side of the child's life. It is too much taken for granted that the child will attain

these without any special attention on the part of anyone. And yet, if the child is to attain these by himself, by merely following the life of his environment, he cannot be expected to transcend that environment; he might, in fact, by virtue of the many temptations and his own immaturity, fall below the standards of his surroundings. A Jewish child may be born in a fine home, and yet the life outside of the home may have altogether too many enticing influences, too strong for the home influence to overcome. And since it is our contention that the Jew must be made to stand out for his ethical conduct, we hold that the conduct of the rising generation must be superior to the present one in ethics and virtue. Our religious schools, whose aim it is to transmit Judaism to our children, must unfailingly include the teaching of its ethics and virtues as something inseparable from the practice of Judaism.

Jewish education must also include the teaching of the Hebrew language. The Hebrew tongue, not alone, but when connected with the faith, with the ethical teach-

ings, with all the hopes of our people, carries with it an extremely inspiring influence. To teach the child the Hebrew in order to create or kindle in him a consciousness of the national hope for the future of Israel is in itself a high ideal, but is not nearly so valuable and inspiring an aim as that of connecting him with the vast spiritual creations of his past. The ability to read the Scriptures in the original, to understand the prophets, the Psalmists and the sages in their own tongue, will bind the child more closely to his past and to his people than any emphasis on nationalism can possibly hope to do. Whatever the method to be employed for making possible the acquisition of this tongue, and this may well be left to those who are expert in the pedagogy of Hebrew, the chief aim of the instruction must be to make our treasures of the past accessible to our children, so that they may receive direct inspiration and wisdom from them.

Jewish education must also have in its schedule the study of Jewish history. Not much need be said here on this subject, for

most of our schools already include it in their program. Our object in mentioning it now is not to urge more emphasis, but rather less emphasis, on it. Jewish history is important in the Jewish training of our children, yet there is no reason why the text-books used in our religious schools should begin and end with Jewish history, or why the short hours of our Sabbath schools should be occupied mainly with the study of events of the past. I need not restate that Judaism administered in terms only of Jewish history will leave our children ignorant of our vital spiritual resources, and will furnish them with very little of their past to carry to the future.

To sum up: we consider Jewish education the cornerstone in the maintenance of Judaism. In fact, we cannot visualize Judaism as sustained without a Jewry well trained to practice it. We must, therefore, instill in our children the cardinal aspects of Judaism and teach them to utilize them in their daily life. We must teach them faith in God—the God of our seers and sages, not of our primitive days. We must initiate

them in prayer—that they may seek God in moments of need. We must implant in them the ethics of our Torah—that they may be just and upright and humane in all their dealings with other human beings. We must impress them with the virtues taught in Judaism—that they may be honest also with themselves, that they may develop a pure, serene nature within themselves. In addition, we must impart to them our historic tongue and the history of our people, in order that they may find the doors of the spiritual creations of the past open to them, and in order that they may know the people of whom they are a part.

CHAPTER XIII

THE SYNAGOGUE

The second vital factor essential in sustaining Judaism is the synagogue. In the past the synagogue occupied a central position in the life the Jew. It was first of all a place of worship. Thrice daily did the whole of the adult male community gather for prayer within its walls. It was also a place of study, where the Torah, the Talmud, and their multitudinous commentaries were daily discussed and cogitated upon. It also served on frequent occasions as a place of assembly, where local or itinerant lecturers of the Law (the Maggidim) addressed the congregation. Incidentally it also functioned as a meeting place, where the members of the community came constantly in close touch with one another. The synagogue thus played a central role in the life of the Jew. There he found himself near his God and close to his people.

The synagogue in this land has assumed a rather different role. Again, any criticism that we may express is not at all intended in the spirit of mere fault-finding; our aim is to call attention to our weaknesses and to indicate some ways in which we think they may be corrected. In no sphere of our Jewish life are we so conscious of the diversity in Jewry as in our synagogues. We are generally known to have three types of congregations: orthodox, conservative and reform, yet there are many varieties within each type. There are various grades of orthodoxy, and various degrees in conservatism, and even different shades of reform. However, all the synagogues, no matter of what type, have this in common, that they are mostly always deserted. To be sure, they are quite well filled once or twice a year, during the High Holy Days, but for the rest of the time there are very few to whom the synagogue has any significance.

We must, therefore, inquire as to where lies the blame for this general desertion. Some believe that the economic conditions under which we find ourselves in this land

should be held to blame; the hours of convocation, they say, interfere with the hours of business; or perhaps vice versa. Some find fault with the services, which they consider altogether too long or too dull. Others are inclined to lay the blame on their spiritual leader. If he, the rabbi—they complain—were only a good “orator,” or, in other instances, if he were only a good “mixer,” the congregation would “grow” more rapidly. The rabbi, of course, is bitter with his congregation for their persistent absence from the services.

It is needless to point out that these various reasons usually offered for the desertion of the synagogues are for the most part petty, and not at all valid. The fact that the hours of business overlap the hours of worship can only partly account for the situation. What of the Friday evening services, held by most congregations at a late hour; why are the pews then empty? What of the Sunday morning services introduced by many reform and a number of conservative congregations, why are they but sparsely attended? As for the length of the services,

we know well that where the services have been abridged, there has been no increase at all in the attendance of the congregation, although that was the goal aimed for. Then, the criticism so often hurled at the rabbi's eloquence or his sociability, may or may not be justified, but it is difficult to see why one should abstain from worshipping God because he finds himself unable to worship the rabbi.

It is clear to us that the real reason why the great majority of our people here in this land are indifferent to divine services is simply that these services have lost all religious significance to them. They do not believe that God hearkens to their prayers, they experience no inspiring effect from them; they see in the services a mere religious ceremony with which they think they can easily dispense. When they do attend, it is usually because there is something in the services that appeals to their aesthetic taste, as, for instance, when the music is exceptionally beautiful or when the rabbi is an orator. Then they come to hear the music or to admire the speaker, but not at all in order to

worship God. It appears that sanctity has fled from the sanctuary or from the heart of the people; religious zeal has vanished, hence the house of God is deserted.

Leaders of the Jewish community have been well aware of the apathetic attitude of our people towards the synagogue, and have tried to remedy the situation by building social halls adjoining the synagogue. They have done more, they have built Jewish Centres where the synagogue constitutes only one of many activities, with the thought in mind that when the people's interest will be kindled by the adjacent activities, they will also be attracted to the synagogue. This experiment has only demonstrated more emphatically the indifference of the Jew to the synagogue; for while the social hall buzzes with life and interest, while the gymnasium and the swimming pool enclosed by the same walls are embraced with avidity and the club rooms are constantly in use, the synagogue in the heart of all this hubbub still stands melancholy and deserted, attended at its services by the same few old men and women. It becomes more and more evident

that in order to make the synagogue once more a center of spiritual gravity, more than mere "attractions" must be offered to the people. The synagogue must again emphasize the immanence of God and the significance and efficacy of prayer, if it is to exist at all as a house of God; it must again preach the truth of God's nearness, of His goodness, of His responsiveness to prayer. If the synagogue cannot reinstate religion in the consciousness of our people, then the synagogue should be altogether abandoned as an institution which cannot function in this land and in our generation.

CHAPTER XIV

THE RABBI

Whether spiritual truths can or cannot be instilled in the minds of our people to-day rests chiefly with our spiritual leaders, the rabbis. The rabbis in this country are, as a rule, disillusioned men. They are mostly men of fine intelligence who have given the youthful years of their life in preparation for the ministry. In their college or seminary days they were promised the leadership of Israel and the championship of God. But very soon after their incumbency, they discover that the real leaders of their congregations are those who have to do with their material maintenance. And as for the championship of God, this too is a function of no special eminence, since God Himself counts so little in the lives of the people. Despite the clamor of the congregation for a rabbi, the rabbi is not long in discovering, and usually greatly to his embitterment, that his functions are

merely nominal; he is of little real value to his community. His chief duties are to conduct divine services and to preach, but these duties he performs before only a handful of people; in the life of the great majority of his members, he plays no part at all. Realizing this, he endeavors to reach his people through social activity, by the conducting of literary clubs and dramatic circles, by all kinds of odd undertakings, which of course are not at all religious. If the people are not interested in religion, he feels he must give them something that will prove of interest; above all, he must keep himself occupied to save his energies from falling into a state of lethargy.

The difficulty, however, in this situation is that the American rabbi is not a spiritually trained man. He is, indeed, intellectual, he is well in touch with modern knowledge, he has a good conception of the mechanical structure of the world, he has a knowledge of the psychological mechanics of human nature, but he has not learned to translate all his modern culture into terms of spirituality; he has not learned to see God at the center of all reality, to see all cause and effect as a divine

method, all abundance and plenty in nature as expressions of God's kindness, all life with its various manifestations as divinity in action. Too often the American rabbi lacks deep spiritual conviction. He cherishes, and rightly, the conceptions of reality which he received in his secular studies, but he fails to endow them with religious significance. The Jewish seminaries themselves, while imparting a great measure of Jewish learning, do not, unfortunately, make the effort to inculcate a religious viewpoint upon life, a spiritual interpretation of existence and certainly not a prayerful consciousness, a yearning for divine aid springing from a true faith in God. The American rabbi, therefore, is poorly equipped for religious leadership.

Being devoid of religious depth, the American rabbi scours the wide horizon for sermon topics that may lure the congregation to its pews; he speaks on current events, on the drama, on popular motion pictures, on politics and social problems, but not on religion. It is clear that had the rabbi been religiously minded, had he had religious experiences in his own life, had he prayed earnestly in his

private chamber, and received the serenity and self-elevation which follow such prayers, he would not have to seek so desperately for irrelevant subjects to discuss from his pulpit. These religious experiences would have lent him endless speech and overmastering eloquence, and, what is more, they would have persisted in his mind just as they did in the minds of the prophets of old, or in the minds of the rabbis of past generations, and would not have permitted any topic distant from Judaism to seek expression through him. It is our opinion that when the rabbi will change, the congregation too will change. When the pulpit will earnestly strive to bring the people back to God, they will of their own accord come back to the Synagogue.

In addition, the American rabbi must make it his special task to teach the American Jew the ethics of Judaism. These ethics are so rich in humanity, so tender in their dealings, so filled with the ideal of consideration for others, that our native American Jews, who are so little acquainted with the contents of Judaism, would undoubtedly be influenced and inspired by the lofty teachings of their

own faith. In a great measure, the synagogue must do for the adults of American Israel what the religious school, ideally speaking, must do for our children. If Israel must stand for the embodiment of Judaism, it must know first what its tenets and what its teachings are. In addition, the Jew who masters and practices the ethics contained in his religious code, will, no matter in what surroundings he finds himself, be looked up to, and respected for his uprightness and humanity. But these can only be preached and taught and impressed upon adults from the pulpit.

The pulpit must also undertake to preach Jewish virtue. Although virtue, as well as many aspects of ethics may be learned from secular volumes or from non-Jewish sources, in Judaism they are issued as divine behests; they are divine testimonies, they are divine patterns for human perfection. This makes their actualization more urgent than when received as mere counsels of a human mind. Then again, when issued through the channels of Judaism, they are offered with the Jewish atmosphere and Jewish traditions

which necessarily accompany them, and indirectly they deepen greatly the Jewish consciousness. There are many truths which all religions endeavor to teach, and yet each impresses these in its own way, in accordance with its own traditions, and thus the integrity of that faith is preserved. We therefore say that the Jewish pulpit must also unfold and impress the significance of Jewish virtue in daily life. The Jew must hear from his rabbi how and why he must curb his anger, why he must conquer any tendency to ostentation and pride, how he may eliminate from his mind envy, duplicity, pessimism. The Jew must receive within the walls of the synagogue his instructions for living.

The pulpit should also bring to the people problems pertaining to Jewish life in general. But the rabbi must take great care, no matter what his attitude toward certain vital Jewish issues, not to annihilate the kinship that should exist between the various Jewish groups, and not to weaken the bonds of his own people to Judaism. Rabbis, for instance, who for twenty-five or thirty years have incessantly preached anti-Zionism, have caused

great injury not only to the Zionist cause, but also to their own congregations; they have filled the minds of their hearers with negative ideas and pressed them farther and farther away from the other ranks of Jewry. We believe the rabbi should select problems in Jewish life in which he can present a constructive, not a negative, view-point, and his aim should be that of creating sympathy and co-operation, not indifference and antagonism.

Thus the synagogue can become a generator of Jewish consciousness, provided its pulpit emanates the deepest in Judaism; it may become the center of inspiration and guidance to our people, as it has once been, if its leader accentuates the vital teachings of our faith; it may, even in this land, become a house of convocation for the people of Israel, if within its walls they can be made to feel God's nearness and care.

CHAPTER XV

THE HOME

The home is another institution with which the preservation of Judaism is indispensably connected. The Jewish home in the past has served as the initiator of all virtues, of all ethics; it was the place where devotion to God was first instilled. The home has particularly lent itself to the practice of religious ceremonies. There is a ritual connected with practically every important function in the home. In addition, every festival and holy day has been celebrated in the home before any place else. The Sabbath, the Passover, Shabuoth, Succoth, the Holy Days, the minor feasts, and the national days of mourning, always received their keynote from the home, which prepared the atmosphere for these occasions. The Jewish home always furnished the setting for every spiritual experience in the life of our people.

This, however, is a picture drawn from the past, though a very recent past. The present laxity of the Jewish home in matters pertaining to Judaism has greatly endangered the existence of Judaism in America. There is so little of the religious spirit in the average Jewish home, it shows so little of its former distinctiveness, that there can hardly be seen in it the survival of centuries of religious life. The religious life in the home should, and always has, centered itself around religious ceremony. There are undoubtedly many traditional ceremonies which cannot well be maintained in this land. But, on the other hand, there are many others which are being neglected simply as the result of indifference on the part of the home-makers. While throughout this treatise we have contended that ceremonies do not constitute the major part of Judaism, yet in the home they should indeed occupy a very prominent place. In this land, the practice of the ritual within the home would greatly banish the crassness of materialism from its atmosphere; it would elevate the household, as spiritual practices do elevate their per-

formers; it would make the ties of relationship among the members of the family stronger, as common practices and ideals always do; above all, it would cement the union between one Jewish home and the multitude of other Jewish homes; it would serve to-day, as it did in the past, as one of the vital mediums by which the Jewish consciousness could be intensified and the traditional spirit of our people promoted.

While our children must receive their instruction in Judaism from the Jewish School, the school can naturally only serve as a place of learning and information. What the child learns in school he must have an environment in which to apply, else his knowledge will either remain an abstraction in his mind or be altogether forgotten. The child's particular environment, we know, is the home. When the home is in harmony with the instruction which the child receives in school, what he has acquired there will dig for itself a deep channel in his consciousness, leaving an ineffaceable impression; but if the home is completely indifferent to the practices he is being taught in school, the gulf be-

tween the school and actual life becomes so wide, that the effect and influence of the former suffer greatly, if they are not altogether erased.

In religious practices the Jew has shown himself as an extremist. From the most scrupulous and meticulous observance of the ritual, down to its most insignificant detail, he has swung to a point where he has abandoned the whole of the ritual, even those phases of it which are essential and beautiful and which would elevate him and his home atmosphere. Because circumstances in this country are not propitious to the rigid maintenance of the entire body of traditions, he is willing to discard them all, even those that would fittingly lend themselves to his new environment. Because the celebration of the Sabbath as a day of complete rest is a matter of great difficulty here, he will not even celebrate it as a day of religious distinction. He prefers to regard himself either as a sinner, or, to silence his conscience, as a non-observant Jew; but he will not attempt to save what he can of the holiness of that day. He does not know that even the Talmud draws a

distinction between one who violates the Sabbath wilfully and one who does so because compelled by circumstances, in which latter case the Talmud shows a far more lenient attitude.

The Sabbath eve should stand out as sacred and distinguished in every Jewish home. It should be a family evening of special significance. The Sabbath candles should be lit, the wine cups filled, prayers recited at the table, matters of business and of material content in general scrupulously avoided. Amusement outside the home should not be sought on that evening; it should be purely a home evening, with ease and rest for the entire family, and enveloped in a religious atmosphere.

Meals within the home, whether on the Sabbath or week days, may be attended by a certain amount of ritual. The prayers before and after the meal, the elimination of foods which the Jewish law finds objectionable, can make the home repast distinctly Jewish.

The traditional prayers upon rising in the morning, even though briefly made, and be-

fore retiring, will go far in deepening the Jewish consciousness, and also in promoting a religious attitude towards life. These traditional prayers have also the power of reviving daily the connections of the Jew with his spiritual past. The manner of these prayers, that is, as to whether they shall be in Hebrew or in the vernacular, whether the Talith and Tephilin shall be worn or not, whether these prayers be of the original length or abbreviated, must depend upon the Jewish knowledge of the individual, upon the time he is able to devote to them, and upon the branch of Jewry, Orthodox, Conservative or Reform, with which he conceives himself to be in harmony. But the manner and method must not interfere with the habit of daily prayer. While prayers of individual supplication need not be offered at any specific hour, but whenever the individual finds himself in need of divine help, prayers of the ritual must be offered daily and at the prescribed hours. It is the habitual phase of this type of prayers that leaves its mark on the Jewish consciousness.

The ceremonies connected with the Jewish

Festivals and Holy Days must be especially nurtured in the home, and within its walls the spirit of the festival should permeate every nook and corner. Passover must find the Jewish home ready to welcome it. The Seder, the Matzoth, the special prayers, even the special traditional dishes, must all enter into the celebration. Shabuoth and Succoth must find their special flavor and traditional atmosphere astir within the home. On Chanukah, we have the special aesthetic advantage of the eight days of lights; great emphasis must be laid on this feast, with its glamorous history, particularly in the presence of the children. They should be, in accordance with the Jewish custom, abundantly supplied with gifts. As this feast usually falls at the season at which our neighbors celebrate their Christmas, it is of special advantage to make our children feel that Chanukah, their own festival, is not less generous to them than is the non-Jewish holiday to their little Christian playmates.

The spirit of sanctity must permeate the home during the Holy Days. More ceremony, more prayers, more religious thought, more

charity, more self-realization, more self-denial, are the marks of the Holy Days, and these must find expression within the home. A closer union is established between the Jew and his Maker, and that union must be consummated within the home.

The Jewish home, plentifully supplied with spirituality and traditional practices, will be a strong instrumentality in counteracting the effects of everything that is adverse to the preservation of Judaism.

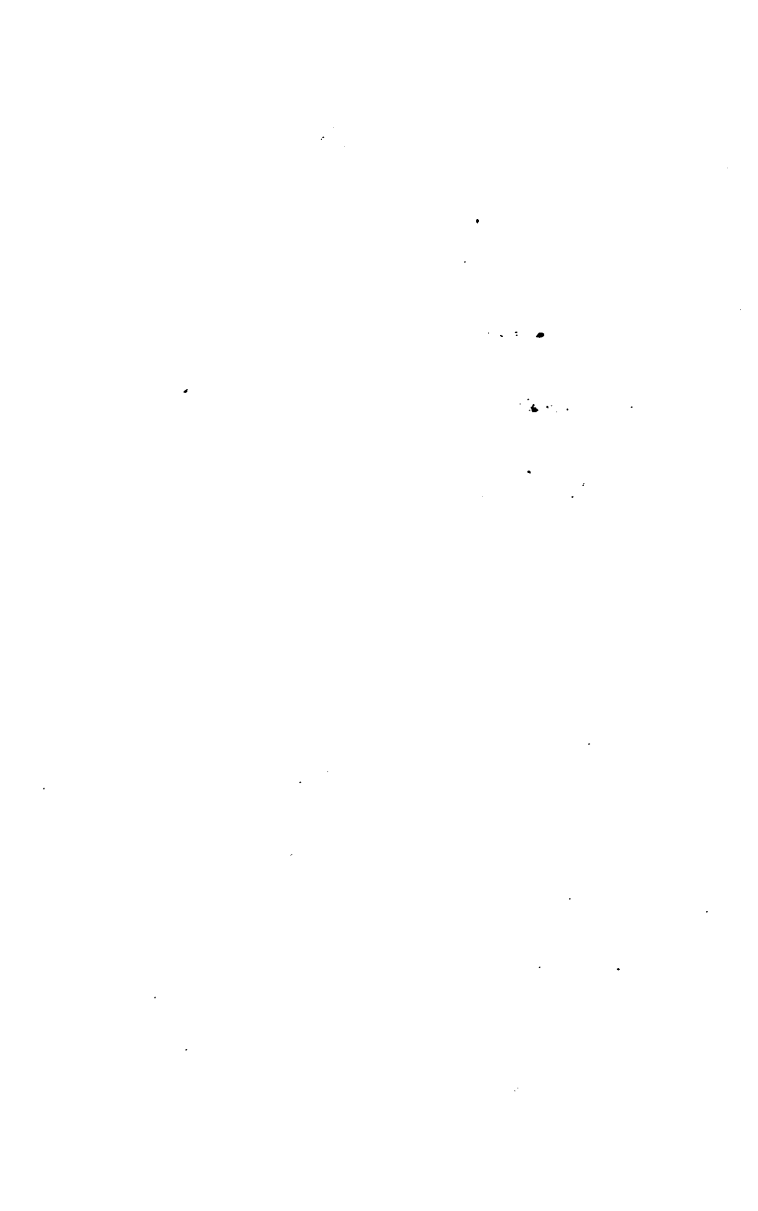
CONCLUSION

We have found that Judaism has not at all outlived its function, but on the contrary, that its teachings are not less vital to us of to-day than they were to the generations of the past. The God conception of our seers has only gained additional support from the thinkers of our age; the ethics and virtues enjoined in the Old Testament are more imperative in our lax age than ever before; spiritual devotion and prayer are not less inspiring and helpful to-day than they were in former days. And as for our religious ceremonies, these too should be to-

day among the strong influences that give a spiritual tone to our lives and that bind together the scattered ranks of our people.

The preservation of Judaism and the preservation of the Jew are interlinked problems. Judaism without the Jew can only be an abstraction; the Jew without Judaism must gradually dissolve as a people; without a common bond, without a common system of living, without a common ideal, without hopes cherished in common, what is there to prevent assimilation in this commingled world? A historic past alone is altogether insufficient to maintain intact a people scattered throughout the world and intermingling with all the races on the earth. A historic background alone cannot uphold a people in the face of a prejudiced world.

In order that the Jew may survive and Judaism be preserved, these two must be rejoined. The Jew must not merely point to his past, he must to-day practice the teachings of Judaism; he must apply it to his daily life, he must teach it to his children, he must receive its inspiration in the synagogue, he must express it in his home.





44 758 678

BM 560 .L7	Lichtenstein Judaism... 1078364
JAN 28 '35 FEB 1 '35	Chopson Lee C. Head 5710 Maryland
JUN 9 '36 JUN 17 '36	Myrtle Levinson 3245 Douglas Blvd.
JUN 2 '37	Don Common 429-B Jackson St.
DEC 16 '37 OCT 21 '37	J. Axelrod Fellow

BM 560
.L7

1078364

SWIFT LIBRARY

UNIVERSITY OF CHICAGO



44 758 678